Volume Forty-Six, Number Four, October 1968

Commentary

The New York Intellectuals
A Chronicle & A Critique
by Irving Howe

The Curious Case of Kol Nidre *Herman Kieval*

Rhetoric and the Arab Mind *Robert Alter*

The Fiction Machine *John Thompson*

Music Criticism Today *B. H. Haggin*

The State of Social Science *Ben B. Seligman*

Books in Review

Adam B. Ulam *Marshall Sklare* *Keith Botsford*

Fritz J. Raddatz *Jacob Katz*

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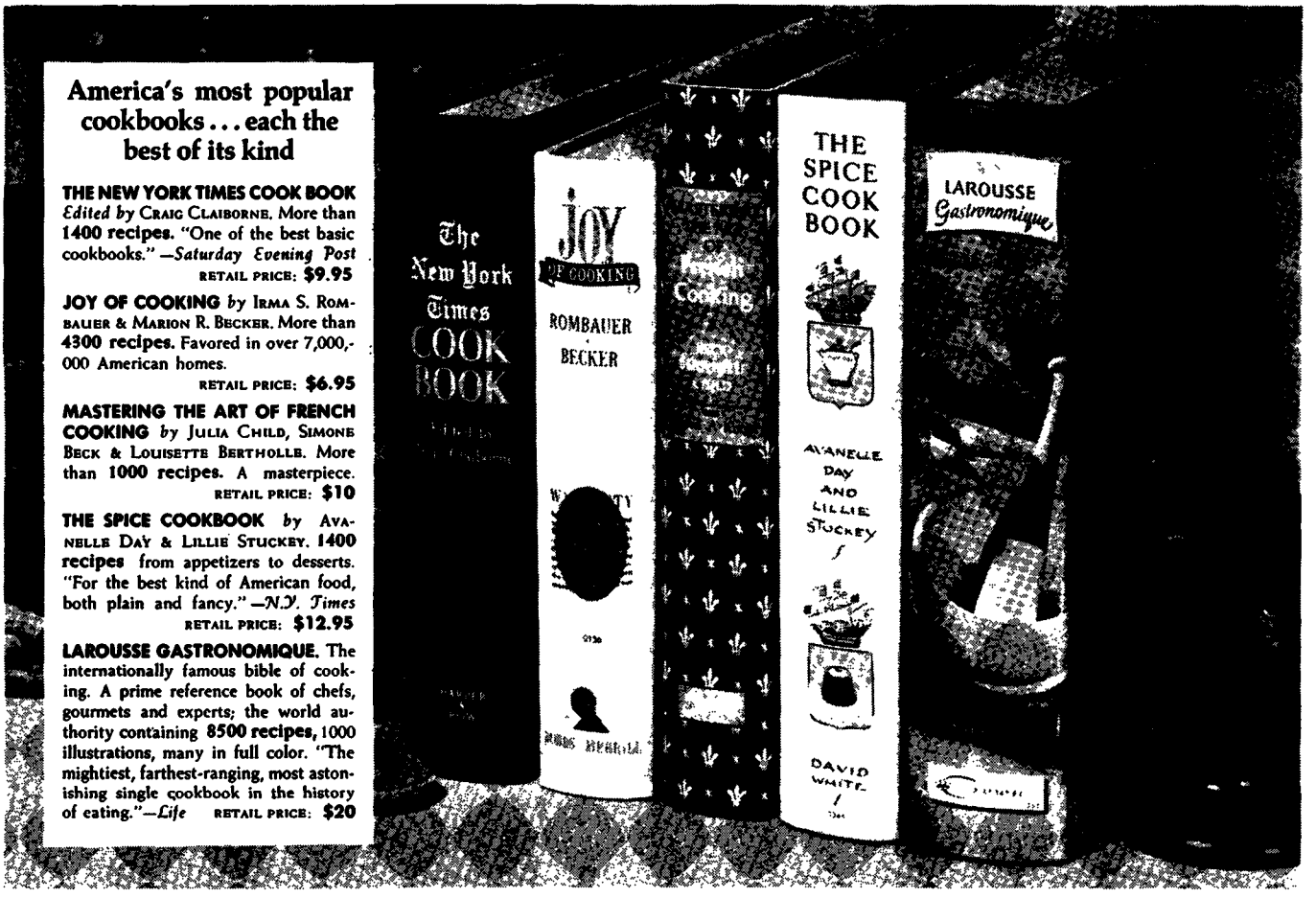

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Commentary

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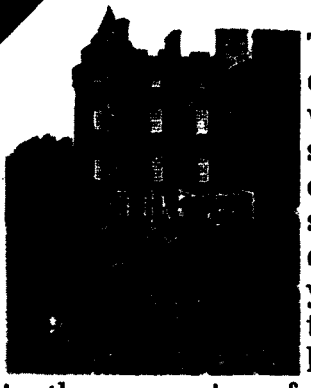
The Return of the Aged Inch



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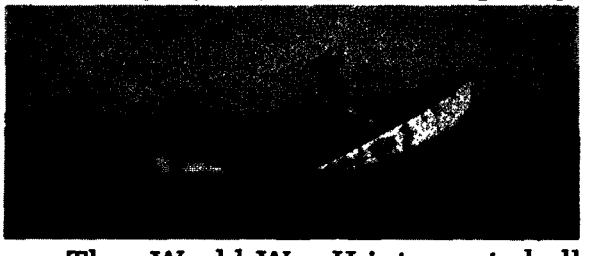

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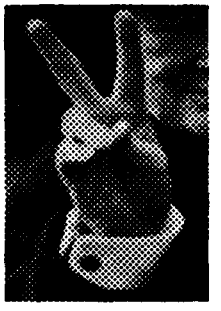

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Letters from Readers

Gentillesse

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was both amused and disturbed by the reflections of H. Stuart Hughes ["Triste Paris," March]. I find them an excellent illustration, in the light of subsequent events, of why radical if not violent solutions to social discontent are being sought in many quarters. This is not to question Mr. Hughes's sympathies, nor his good will, nor least of all his analysis, which is incisive and, as far as it goes, to the point. But he fails completely to realize the implications of his own observations.

Certainly no one could have predicted what was to happen at Nanterre, nor that it would develop into a national movement; what is possible, on the other hand, is at the very least to avoid equating intellectual integrity with intellectual and social *gentillesse*. Mr. Hughes's nostalgic and prissy solutions to problems penetrating French, particularly Parisian, society are as disastrous for students committed to social change as their insurrection undoubtedly has proven to be for Mr. Hughes's affection for Paris.

In short, those intellectuals who try to resolve problems by ignoring them are committed simply to intensifying their own unhappiness.

ERNEST H. SCHELL
Antioch College
Yellow Springs, Ohio

Israel & History

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Reading Professor J. L. Talmon's brilliant and fascinating article, "Israel Among the Nations" [June], is an experience which demands of the reader a re-examination of many a commonly held conception and of many a widespread belief.

As a historian I have frequently pondered the real task of historiography: is it to chart an unknown historical ocean, to give shape to the mass of the historical past, to describe and analyze past upheavals; or is it to learn a lesson from history and to sense the upheavals to come?

I recently came upon the following instructive passage by the historian, Simon Dubnow, written in 1898:

. . . Granted that the Zionists will secure from the Turkish Sultan the right of free colonization in Palestine and that with the help of bank loans they will greatly expand the earlier colonization, in the hope that in due course a large Jewish center with political authority will be created there. It should be borne in mind, however, that increased colonization will be definitely limited by the economic and agricultural conditions of the country. During seventeen years of concentrated effort, under conditions of increased emigration, with huge expenditures of money and with the aid of the Rothschild millions, we succeeded in settling on the land a total of about 3,600 Jews, or about 212 per year. . . . Granted that the committees of western Zionists will operate with larger sums and that they will bring into Palestine every year not 200, but 1,000 settlers. In a hundred years the Jewish agricultural population of Palestine would then be 100,000. Let us increase this number fivefold through natural population increase and through the flow of masses of industrial workers into the cities. We will find that after a hundred years the land of Israel will have a half million Jews, which means a population slightly larger than the Jewish population of the province of Kiev (428,000 according to the latest census).

It is, of course, pleasing to entertain the hope that at the beginning of the 21st century there will be a half a million Jews in our ancient homeland. But is it possible to solve by this means the problem of the ten million Jews in the Diaspora, which will become twenty million in a hundred years? . . .

Political Zionism is thus a web of fantasies: the dream of the creation of a Jewish state guaranteed by international law, the dream of colonizing a great part of the Jewish people, and the dream of finding the solution of the Jewish question in this manner.

Today, as we read these words, after two world wars, after the Holocaust, and after the establishment of Israel, we cannot but won-

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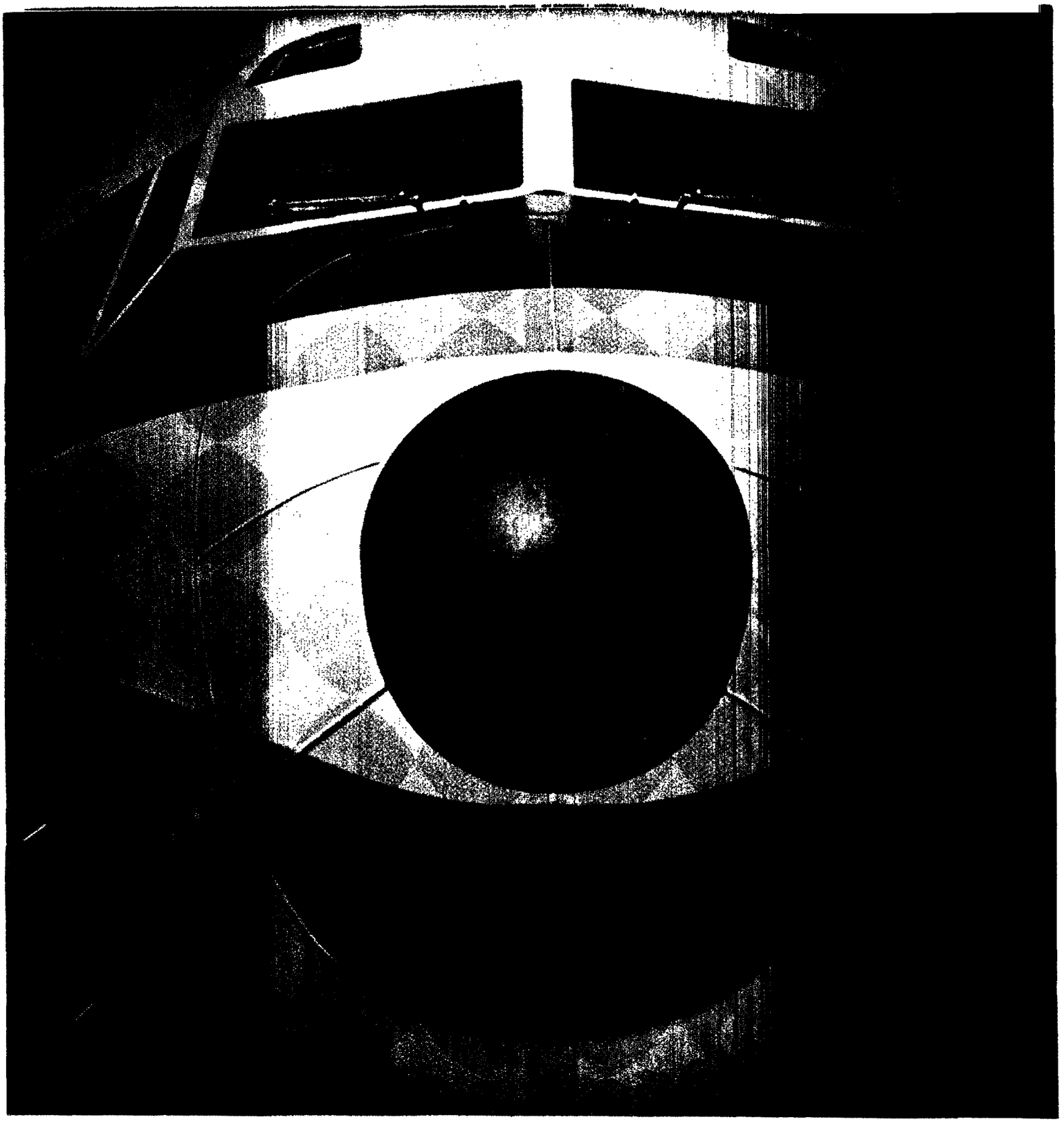

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der how a historian of the caliber of Dubnow could have erred so disastrously in his historical prognosis. The more one reflects on the real cause of this fatal gaffe, the more one comes to the conclusion that Dubnow was deaf to the growing roar heralding the coming upheavals. It seems to me that even in Talmon's penetrating analysis this roar is heard only in the dimensions of the past. We cannot but ask ourselves: what of the present and the future? Has catastrophe been finally eliminated from the horizons of Jewish history? Has the tragic Jewish fate which befell the Jewish enclaves and the Jewish "Golden Ages" among the nations run its course? And have the Jews in the dispersion reached safe shores for all time? To quote Talmon, has "American Jewry, like its counterpart communities in other Western countries, been moving into a position resembling that of the descendants of the French Huguenots"?

. . . I do not believe that we should constantly be on the lookout for catastrophes. Nevertheless, I feel that for our generation, which has lived through two world wars and emerged from the gas ovens, there is no basis for complacency. . . .

Talmon's assessment of the kibbutz movement calls for a similar comment. The tribute he pays to the past achievements of the movement is one of the highlights of his essay, but once again one has reservations as to his appraisal of the movement's present and future.

Talmon is right in his view of the problems raised for the kibbutz by the exhaustion of the sources of reinforcement and expansion, mainly as a result of the Holocaust—these problems being identical with those facing the state as a whole. He rightly points out the difficulties faced by the kibbutz as a result of the transformations within Israeli society. However, we cannot accept his thesis that the vitality of the kibbutz has been sapped by its contribution of the most dynamic elements within it to the service of the state, since the proportion of its members serving outside the kibbutzim was even larger at the time of the kibbutz's greatest flowering than it is today. On the contrary, the extent of the kibbutz's activities outside its own confines should be seen as a sign of strength rather than weakness. . . . The unique contribution of the kibbutz today lies not only in its providing so much of the leadership of the defense forces, but also in a variety of other sectors in which the activity of small pioneering groups is of paramount importance. The kibbutz is not only a myth, but a dynamic, productive, educative and fighting reality, expressing itself in its extraordinary achievements in agriculture and industry, in education and art, in literature and in the evolution of its unique way of life.

The use of the word myth here requires some clarification. Napoleon once said that history is a myth in which we wish to believe; R. R. Palmer adds: a myth which is in our interest. The term myth has acquired a negative connotation. And yet when we consider the basic purposes of education—namely, the creation of cultures and spiritual realms—are these conceivable without myth? Our whole culture is based upon and exists by myths. The crux of the problem is to distinguish among myths, delusions, self-deceptions, pointless flights of fancy. In this sense the kibbutz continues to be a precious myth, the most valuable link in the chain of present-day Israeli being. The kibbutz does not exist for the myth's sake alone: it is a reality in its own right, a movement now celebrating its 50th anniversary. The gray hair of the founders is to be seen among the ranks of their youthful offspring and followers who are today army officers, workers, and managers in charge of the various branches of industry and agriculture, etc. In a world in which the conflict of generations is a rule, the kibbutz exemplifies a society in which sons follow in the footsteps of their fathers. This, then, is the reality of today. As for the future, it would be well to beware of statistics. Let Dubnow speak for himself.

My concluding comments concern themselves with a number of immediate problems facing us today. I fully agree with Talmon on the "dangers of victory." But I do not think that he suggests any real way out of the *cul de sac*. Is the controversy between the doves and the hawks relevant to our true problems? Does Talmon's suggestion that the Israel government now disclose its cards really get at the root of the problem? I have often wondered whether Trotsky's slogan "no war and no peace" was really devoid of reason? Through a quirk of fate this phrase has become Israeli reality.

What really are the roots of our conflict with the Arabs, and what are the steps necessary to define it? It seems that there is no political

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path to a solution, since the true conflict is not with the Arab leaders of the Arab states but with the Arab inhabitants or former Arab inhabitants of Israel. I feel that in our historical situation we are bound to try to isolate the points of maximum sensitivity, and here apply that which Talmon terms reciprocity. Moreover, the Arab terror has added a new dimension to the conflict, in that the struggle now continues unabated with those with whom we are in true conflict. We must therefore direct our peace policy toward this element, since peace with the Arab leaders, which is in any case a pipe dream, would not guarantee us peace with these Palestinians. In consequence our path to peace must be a path of coexistence with them, notwithstanding all the difficulties which may arise; this must be our chosen policy not because it is ideal in itself, but because it responds to the reality of our situation.

We must, as a first step, earn the confidence of the Arab masses in Israel, by doing our utmost to advance their interests; much has been done already but not enough. The reality of coexistence must be created, and this would contribute more to peace than any other political declaration. And, of course, we must—energetically, imaginatively, boldly, and using all our resources—solve the problem of the Arab refugees who are under our control.

This action cannot be postponed on the pretext of lack of available resources. The means of the Jewish people all over the world must be mobilized toward this goal while appealing to its traditional sense of decency and generosity. The support of the nations would follow.

Peace can only be won by creating more and more facts of coexistence: words alone will not suffice.

ZEEV IVIANSKI
Kibbutz Ein-Harod
Israel

Truman & the Liberals

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Marcus Cunliffe in his review in your July issue apparently has not completed his homework if he really believes that Irwin Ross, in *The Loneliest Campaign*, has best articulated the notion that Truman's reelection in 1948 hurt the liberal cause. Actually, Earl Latham of Amherst made this very point with great force in his award-winning book, *The Communist Controversy in Washington from the New Deal to McCarthy*, published in 1966. Also, Barton J. Bernstein of Stanford speculated along these lines in a book review that appeared in *The Progressive* in October 1966.

Even if some historians have rated Truman among the "near great" Presidents, his role is now being reevaluated by a host of younger scholars, of whom the most prolific is Professor Bernstein. While it is still too early to reach any conclusions that are more than tentative, those familiar with Truman historiography will find very dubious such statements as, ". . . it still seems that Harry Truman was right to do his damnedest."

Finally, if Professor Cunliffe is seeking to determine the origins of McCarthyism, I recommend to him for reading the militant, anti-Communist speeches of President Truman, Secretary of State Byrnes, and others, beginning in 1945. Such speeches were indeed a contributing factor to the "red scare." At best the election of 1948 was a safety valve that proved faulty.

MICHAEL H. EBNER
Charlottesville, Virginia

MR. CUNLIFFE writes:

I did not say Irwin Ross invented the notion that Truman's reelection hurt the liberal cause. I said he had expressed this view with precision and force. I did not maintain that Truman was a man without faults. I meant that taking into account everything Truman knew *in 1948*, he was "right to do his damnedest": i.e., right not supinely to concede defeat, nor to persuade himself that a Republican victory would be in the nation's best interests. It may well be, as New Left spokesmen argue, that such a context of political calculation was too narrow and self-regarding. But it was the actual context of American presidential politics in 1948, and so of Mr. Ross's book, and so of my review of his book.

The real point of Mr. Ebner's letter seems to be a different one—that Harry Truman was a person of no stature, dismally representative of his nation and undeserving of praise. For what my opinion is worth, I share the feeling that in the postwar decade the United States made serious errors, overseas

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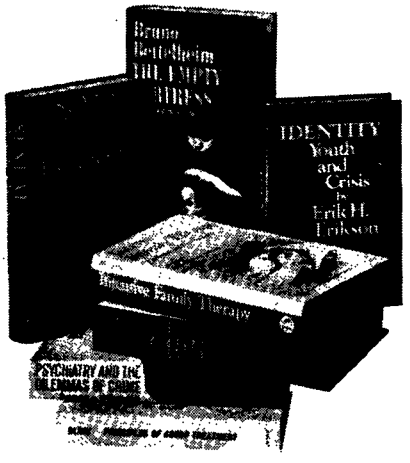

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and at home, of omission and commission. At the time I was, so to speak, a consenting adult. In other words, I believed that even small progress in such fields as civil rights was better than no progress. In foreign relations, I believed that the Soviet Union was at least as intransigent as the United States; that the noisy anti-Communism of 1945-47 was mainly a response to Russian belligerence, rather than vice versa; that the Marshall Plan, whatever its motives or its ultimate consequences, was a wise and remarkable initiative; and that Truman's subsequent reaction to the "red herring" of Communist subversion was on the whole creditable. On reflection I still believe these to be true. Truman and his contemporaries made a mess of things; but then the whole world was in a mess. To younger people, middle-aged survivors like myself may appear too concerned with what is possible, instead of with what is desirable. It is certainly a tendency that afflicts politicians. Historians must surely concern themselves with both aspects. Harry Truman strikes me as a man of limited ability who improved considerably with experience in high office. As a middle-aged historian with an interest in American political and other behavior, I do not see —on major issues—what President Truman *should* have done otherwise that he *could* have done otherwise.

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Graves vs. Fitzgerald

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Why is Robert Graves so worked up ["Translating the Rubaiyyat," July]? Prior to Fitzgerald's English version of the *Rubaiyyat*, Omar Khayaam was known in Persia as an outstanding astronomer and mathematician. If anything, he was only a minor poet, far overshadowed by Hafiz and Rumi. Since Fitzgerald's "discovery" of Omar . . . the West has made much more of him as a poet, than the East. As for translations, Fitzgerald never claimed to translate the Rubaiyyat but to transfuse Persian ideas into English and provide some form to the poetry. We in the West are free to interpret the Rubaiyyat literally or allegorically. . . .

I find nothing in the Graves-Ali-Shah translation that differs much from the literal translations of Heron-Allen, Christensen, or Swami Govina Tirtha. I think that Graves was carried away by his association with Ali-Shah who claims to have the earliest manuscript of the *Rubaiyyat* extant. With all due respect for Graves's scholarship, I still prefer Fitzgerald's "distorted" poetry to Graves's literal free verse.

SAUL KRUGER
Silver Spring, Maryland

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Robert Graves is usually such a pleasure to read, especially when he assumes the role of literary assassin, that I felt somewhat abashed at his article, "Translating the Rubaiyyat," in your July issue.

For example, he and his friend, Omar Ali-Shah, both make a great point about Fitzgerald's description of early sunlight "noosing" the sultan's turret. Graves remarks that he would have "suspected the 'noose of light' metaphor as inauthentic. Early sunlight flashed on a turret does not 'noose' it; the western part must remain relatively unilluminated."

Ali-Shah objects, "How does one noose the flat roofs of Nishapur

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with never a minaret in sight? . . . 'Kamand' in Persian certainly means 'noose' but in poetic usage also means 'shaft, ray or effusion.' Hence our version."

Hence also Fitzgerald's—despite Major Bowen. In his fifth and final version of the Rubaiyyat, as it appears in virtually every anthology, the opening quatrain runs:

Wake! for the Sun who scattered into flight
The Stars before him from the Field of Night,
Drives Night along with them from Heav'n, and Strikes
The Sultan's Turret with a Shaft of light.

As a matter of fact, at three other points in the article, Graves quotes earlier, and inferior, versions of the translation rather than Fitzgerald's fifth and final reworking. This is carelessness, at the least. . . .

When Graves says early in his article, "I foresaw but was not daunted by the hostility that publication would excite," what he means is that he foresaw and welcomed hostility. A good part of his career has consisted of arousing hostility, then charging the enemy. That is why it is so invigorating to read him. And truly he does no harm. Wordsworth's "A Solitary Reaper," stands as strong as ever despite his . . . assault. Homer still impresses us as a great epic poet, not a great comic one. And in the case of Fitzgerald, whether he missed all or some or none of Omar's meaning, his version will continue to be read. . . .

MEL HOSANSKY
Jamaica, New York

MR. GRAVES writes:

My translation of the *Rubaiyyat* is not in "free verse," unless one can call *Hamlet* and the *Tempest* "blank verse." Nor did I ever call Homer a "great comic poet"; I have only credited him with a sense of humor missing in Milton, Virgil, and the so-called "great epic poets." That Khayaam was only a minor poet compared with Hafiz or Rumi is an opinion quoted from some critic who is most unlikely to have read any of the three at length even in translation.

For the average critic "major" and "minor" are measures of length only not of quality.

So Fitzgerald got "shaft" right at his fifth attempt, did he? But he got the rest of the verse wrong and made an ugly assonance of *strikes* with *night* and *light*. If everyone will have patience the original A.D. 1153 manuscript will be published within the next few months, along with other manuscripts of perhaps even greater importance.

Jewish Education

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I suppose Robert Alter's . . . article is meant to be, at least in part, a review of *The Education of American Jewish Teachers*, which I edited ["Teaching Jewish Teachers," July]. However he has very little to say about the contents of the book and ignores entirely the questions it raises, the problems it considers, and the proposals it advances for the more effective functioning of the Hebrew teachers colleges. . . . Instead, Mr. Alter uses the book as a springboard for a lengthy statement of his own views on American Jewry and its doubtful future as a cultural community. . . .

Mr. Alter posits the premise that "Jewish identity in the modern world has been and remains a highly problematic matter, certainly for intellectuals, except for those who are religious or ideological fundamentalists." The contributors to the volume are not, however, shackled by this premise. They know that Jewish survival was menaced in the past, yet small groups contrived to preserve the Jewish people and its heritage. Somehow the necessary changes were effected within the framework of tradition. . . . The book and its contributors decline to waste time bewailing the inevitable. They study present problems and try to find solutions—albeit only partial ones.

The book deals with one institution—the Hebrew teachers college—and it recognizes an urgent need for reform. It indulges neither in diatribe nor in theoretical formulations which would encompass the ultimate. . . . It assumes that reform will be slow and gradual and proposes changes which have immediate relevance. Mr. Alter apparently despairs of any progress in Jewish education under present leadership, which he characterizes as a "miasma of mediocrity." The book does not share this view—it believes that reform must come from within. . . . I recall a "new approach" in Jewish education from outside, well publicized a generation ago; its issue was a pamphlet of glittering generalities. We must begin with what has been achieved . . . and build on its foundations.

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If the present Hebrew teachers colleges are the basis of Jewish teacher education, we must know precisely what they are doing. We must begin with the facts. . . . The book does just this, providing for the first time the essential facts about curriculum, students, faculty, sponsorship and financing achievements, etc. If Mr. Alter had devoted at least one of his ten columns to the contents of the book, the reader might have been apprised of this. . . .

Space will permit only a few illustrations. The colleges require Hebrew as the language of instruction, but this hampers significant student participation. The colleges attempt to function both as teacher-training institutions and as schools of advanced Jewish studies, and they are at a disadvantage in competing with the Jewish theological seminaries and the general universities. The book deals with these problems. The effects of the growth of Jewish studies in the general universities are discussed, as is the role of Israeli teachers in our Jewish schools. Attention is given to the neglect of contemporary Jewish life in the curriculum of the colleges. All this, and more, Mr. Alter ignores.

A final word. . . . Mr. Alter finds most of the contributions on a low level of "stylistic sophistication," whatever that ultra-modern term means. I wonder, however, whether he has ever done basic research involving statistical information. In this type of writing, clarity is the primary aim. The book is a work of basic research not meant for summer reading or for those who read on the run. I venture to hope that the serious reader genuinely concerned about Jewish education will find it challenging and rewarding.

OSCAR I. JANOWSKY
Verona, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Mr. Alter makes a number of telling points about the inadequacy of Jewish cultural education in America, and one cannot help but be in accord with his observations about the "general indifference" to serious Jewish culture among Jewish intellectuals and communal leaders. But his recommended partial solution to the problem—namely, the improvement of our Hebrew teachers colleges—is at best only a partial solution, and at worst, betrays, to use his own words, a rather "smug parochialism."

That an article by a noted Jewish scholar entitled "Teaching Jewish Teachers" should not *once* mention Yiddish is a more frightening portent of the future of the American Jew, than is the widespread indifference to Jewish culture. The American Jew is an Ashkenazic Jew; his most recent experience has been European, his native tongue for the last millennium has been Yiddish. Why then this pretended ignorance of the recent past?

Hebrew may be the "indispensable key to three thousand years of Jewish experience." It would, however, be very difficult to argue that, over any sizable fraction of this time span, it was Hebrew which played the most important role in giving expression to the Jewish consciousness. Our culture over the last thousand years has been a *Yiddish* culture.

Mr. Alter states that "these passionate Hebraists embodied a positive value not easy to come by anywhere else in American education —singleminded dedication to a noble idea." May I suggest that Mr. Alter acquaint himself with the Yiddishist movement; he will assuredly encounter the same phenomenon.

For all of the efforts and successes of the Hebraist movement, cited by Alter, I can cite similar cases among the Yiddishists: Yiddish day schools and high schools; the Jewish Teachers Seminary in New York; the multiplicity of Yiddish journals, literary . . . educational . . . and cultural; the recent publication of a Yiddish dictionary by the late Professor Uriel Weinreich of Columbia University, and so on.

I hope that my remarks will not be construed as a negation of the importance of Hebrew culture. Certainly no productive relationship with our brothers in Israel and no understanding of the roots of Judaism are possible without a knowledge of Hebrew. Nevertheless, I see no hope for a "meaningful continuity with the Jewish past" without a knowledge of Yiddish and the incredibly abundant literary, ethical, and cultural heritage which accrues to it. When "Jewish leaders" actively or passively denigrate the language and culture of our European experience, I fear for the future of the American Jew. When these alleged spokesmen are aided and abetted by the sins of omission of scholars like Mr. Alter, I despair.

JEFFRY V. MALLOW
Department of Physics
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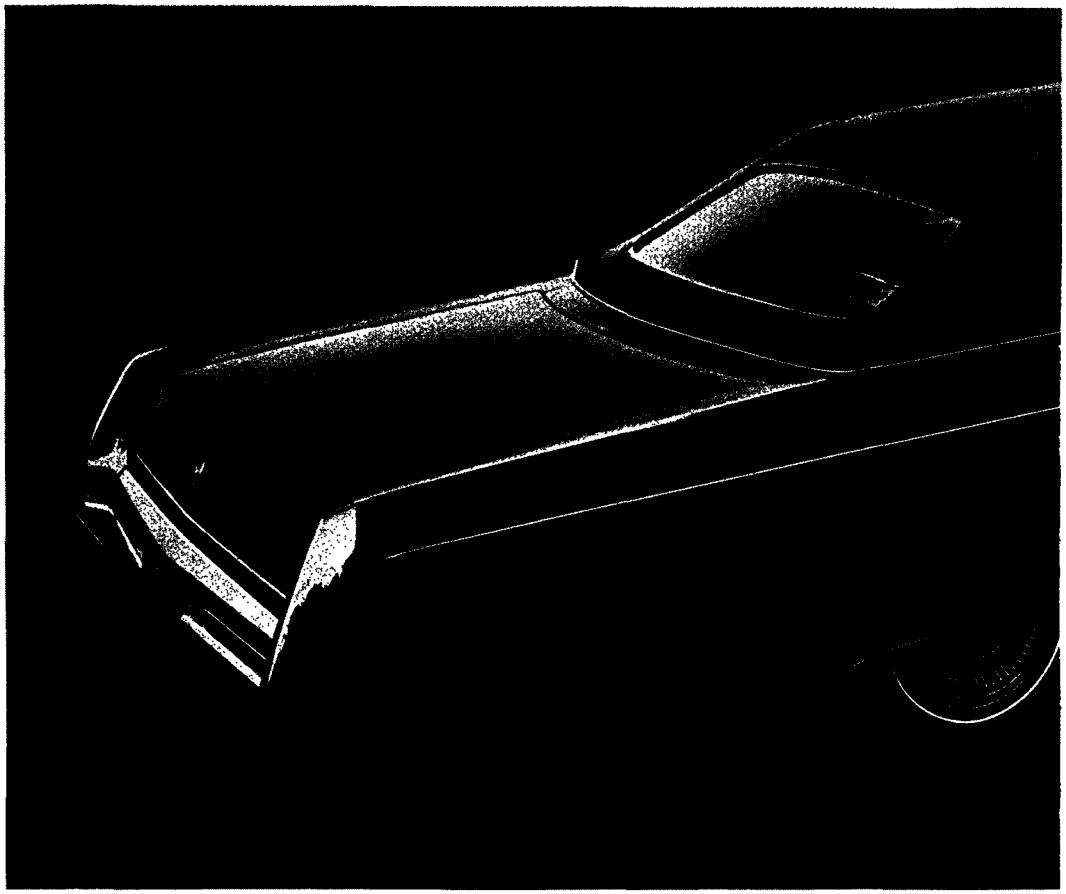

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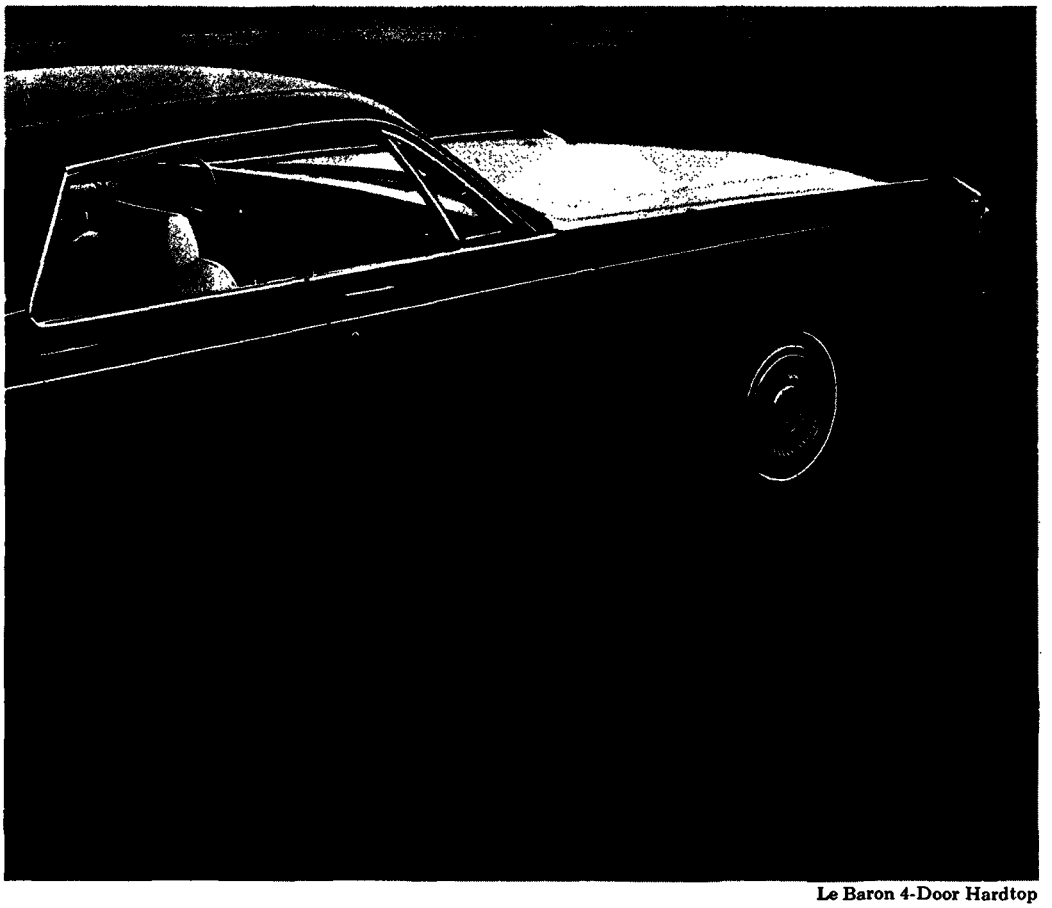

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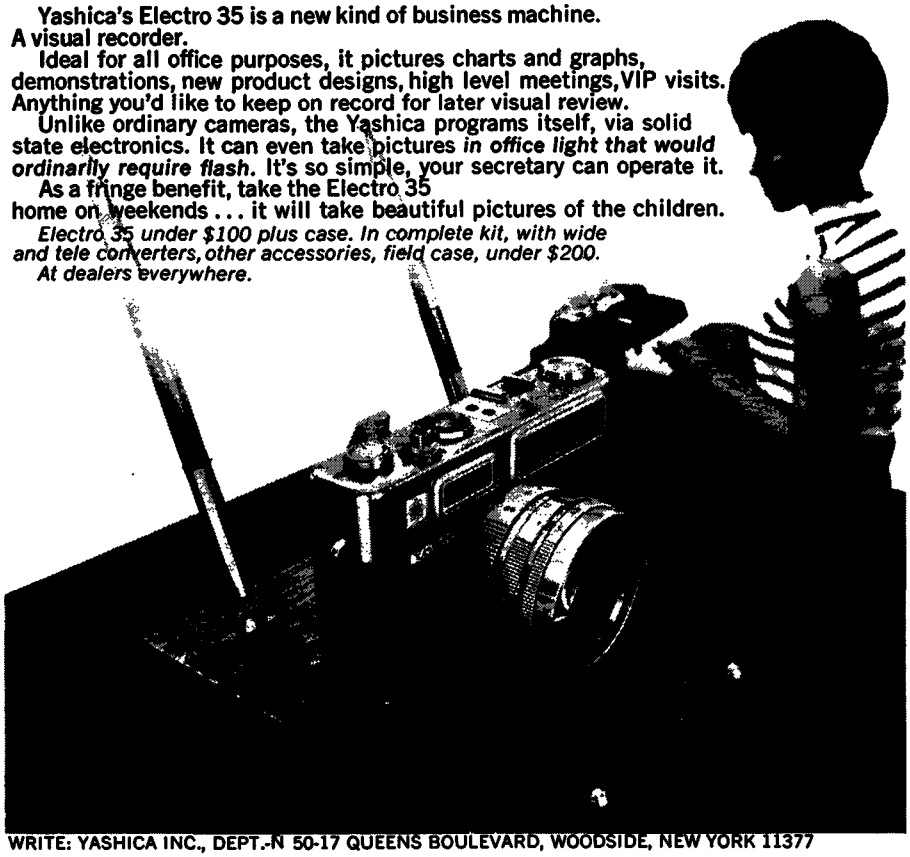

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TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Robert Alter's title, "Teaching Jewish Teachers," is deceptive. He says himself that the teachers colleges train not Jewish teachers but educated Jews, perhaps Jewish intellectuals and thus "teachers" in the broadest sense. But the most interesting question in the article is: What ought to be the nature . . . of a committed, as opposed to an alienated, Jewish intelligentsia?

One purpose is of course the creative survival of Jewry and Judaism—this raises no problem for those already committed, and holds no weight with the alienated. As for its other purpose, Alter says that each American ought "to begin out of an informed awareness of his own particular origins, of the possibilities of intelligent dissent from the attitudes and assumptions of the American majority." At first thought, this is good old-fashioned pluralism. . . . At second thought, the "intelligent dissent, etc." may be recognized in the *alienated* Jewish intelligentsia, which is certainly critical of "the attitudes and assumptions of the American majority," though ostensibly it bases its critique on general intellectual and even American principles, not on a Jewish counter-heritage. I say "ostensibly," because the spiritual descent of today's Jewish avant garde can be traced back through Yiddish-speaking socialists like Zhitlovsky and Medem and Cahan who also happened to advocate Jewish cultural autonomy. Furthermore, the two basic issues facing America today—the equality of *all* men and the imperative of peace—are the two hallmarks of the Hebraic tradition which distinguish it from the Hellenic, for instance; it is no coincidence that the scions of Isaiah and ben Zakkai should be prophets against oppression and violence today.

Now, it is the peculiarity of the Jewish heritage that, being largely intellectual in substance and in mode of transmission, it can dispense to a surprisingly large degree with the "organic ties" of ethnic customs and rituals, yet still maintain its continuity. It has done so several times, adopting the mores of, say, Moorish Spain, then exchanging them for those of Holland or Eastern Europe, while continuing the same intellectual tradition. That is why the teachers colleges could play such a key role in keeping the prophetic inspiration flowing from the traditional sources to today's generation, if only they

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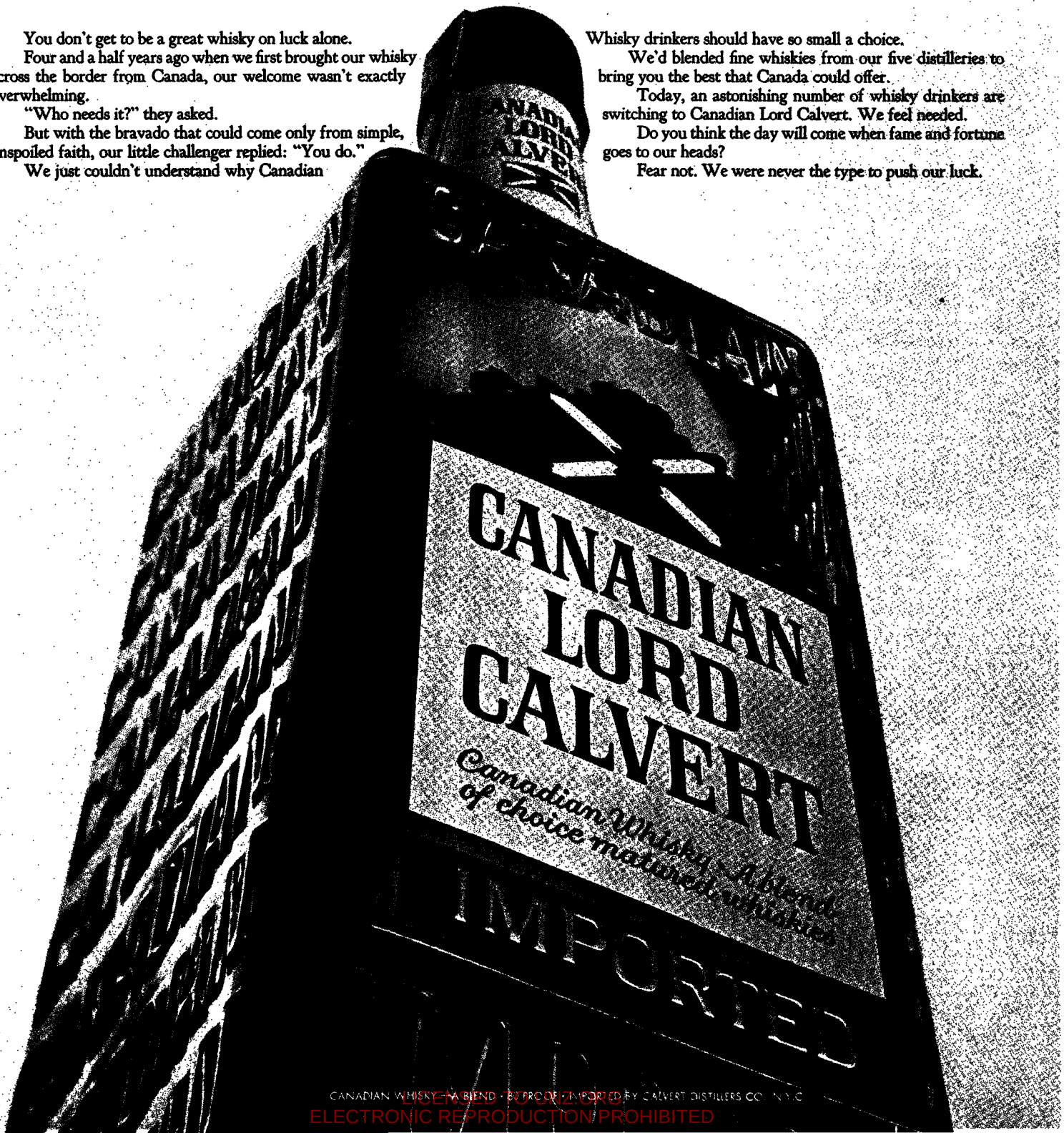

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were to see their purpose as such. My experience has been that, fearing to break openly with the hallowed religious outlook, but too realistic to try to indoctrinate students into it, they have become increasingly hung up on a purely philological approach which is not conducive to applying ancient ideas to today's world. Even so, some of the message inevitably seeps through.

A generation of Jewish students brought up with an openly secular approach to the tradition, as is the case in Israel, will be in a position to develop into the committed Jewish *intelligentsia* that Alter speaks of. Secularity is necessary for the freedom of approach which can lead to creation of new forms conceived specifically for today's needs. By "forms," I mean, firstly, literary and artistic works drawing their inspiration from the Hebrew (and Yiddish) literary traditions, morally serious and life-affirming, essentially anti-tragic as the prophets are anti-tragic. I mean, secondly, lifestyles and institutions based on the principles of the pre-modern Jewish choreography of living which hallowed every moment and every action, yet freed from the authoritarianism, arbitrariness, and occasional irrelevance of the *halacha*.

Not the least achievement of Jewish education is that it produces generation after generation of alienated Jews; it will probably continue to do so in the foreseeable future. When it is seen that the alienated and committed Jews have complementary roles, there may emerge a middle ground which will be the true basis of continued Jewish existence and creativity for generations to come.

LEONARD LEVIN

Waltham, Massachusetts

MR. ALTER writes:

It is understandable that an editor should want to see his book reviewed, but that is not what I had in mind, even "in part," when I wrote the essay, and I can hardly be held responsible for the failure of my intentions to converge with Mr. Janowsky's desires.

When I complained of lack of "stylistic and intellectual sophistication" . . . it was because I assume in general some connection between the ability to think and the ability to use language. One clearly does not expect an educator citing statistics to write in the prose of a Norman Mailer, but both the words and the thinking of most of the contributors to the volume gave evidence of minds that had gone dead decades ago, or that perhaps were never fully alive. The fact that Jewish identity is not problematic for these writers is itself a key symptom of their state of intellectual somnolence: for the past century at least, identity of any sort has been a troubling—but surely not "shackling"—concern for most people who have dared to use their minds unflinchingly.

Finally, I am puzzled by the inference that I was dismissing the future of American Jewry as a cultural community. On the contrary, I tried to argue for a maximalist vision of Jewish culture in this country, and it was to the Hebrew teachers colleges that I gave chief credit as the source of that vision.

Praise

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

"The Conversion" by Victor Perera in your August issue is a beautiful story and so apropos!

Thank you for printing it.

L. LANDAU

Woodside, New York

007

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

"The little man had told me a pack of lies. All his yarns about the Balkans and the Jew-anarchists and the Foreign Office conference were eyewash. . . ." This is Hannay talking, Buchan's hero of *The Thirty Nine Steps*. He's talking about Scudder, the spy Mordecai Richler quotes in "James Bond Unmasked" in the July COMMENTARY.

The plotters in *The Thirty Nine Steps* are Germans; the plotters in Buchan's *Three Hostages* are Irish and they sit around a peat fire crooning over what's going to happen to the world because grandma was violated by a Black and Tan, and grandpa flogged by a member of the R.I.C. In *Greenmantle* no one ever gets to know who the plotters are. They certainly aren't the little white-faced Jews of Scudder's imagination.

Richler lets Ambler and Greene off the anti-Semitic English writer-of-thrillers hook, so I suppose he doesn't loathe them as he does "Buchan, Fleming, and their sort." But what about Household (*Rogue Male, Watcher in the Shadows*) and Childers (*The Riddle of the Sands*)? Aren't they pushers of the Protocols of Zion stuff

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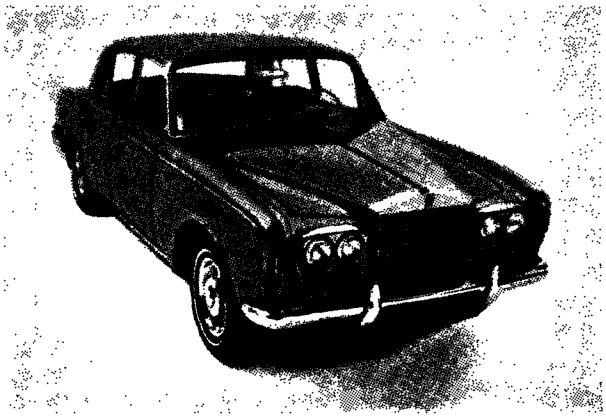

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too? Or hasn't Richler read them? The villains of those books are Germans but maybe Richler can change Germans into scheming rabbis by simply saying "clear progenitors," as he does for SMERSH and SPECTRE, easy marks that they are.

Fleming is fair game, but a little too easy for real sport. Richler uses a lot of space to say Fleming was no gentleman. Who would argue that? And Bond! Butch-trade, a loser, a man who files down the firing pin of his automatic (it would jam), a slob, just like Fleming. But an anti-Semitic conspirator? A menace?

The editor of a famous monthly journal once said that real sickness, the worst disease, is not being able to identify the enemy. Buchan's distaste for Jews was unpleasant. Adolph Eichmann was rather fond of us.

HAROLD KELLER

New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

While the first part of Mordecai Richler's article is interesting and informative, the second part is very largely an exercise in silliness. . . .

Take, for example, Mr. Richler's citation of the selection from John Buchan. The passage is, to be sure, in poor taste. However, since Buchan was *not* an anti-Semite in the usual sense of the term (i.e., he did not openly express hostility to Jews, and did not agitate against Jews), we can legitimately criticize only his lapse of taste. We cannot refer to him as "an ignorant, nasty-minded anti-Semite." While there are writers who have strong anti-Semitic tendencies, to look for anti-Semitism in cases which are nothing more than lapses of good taste is the sort of silliness which Jews should have outgrown by now. . . .

Nor does Ian Fleming's use of plots which bear certain resemblances to the Protocols of the Elders of Zion make him an anti-Semite. In this case Richler is employing a kind of "guilt by resemblance" which I'm sure he would criticize if it were used on a writer whose politics he happened to like. . . .

[Rabbi] NOAH M. GAMZE

Downtown Synagogue

Detroit, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Mr. Richler's unmasking of latent anti-Semitism and xenophobia in Ian Fleming's James Bond thrillers was extremely informative. It confirmed suspicions I had held ever since I saw the movie, *Dr. No*.

Both the film and the book have the mad scientist describe himself as "the only son of a German Methodist Missionary and a Chinese girl of good family," to wit, a Eurasian. The book further elaborates upon his right-hand heart, amputated hands, and megalomania, skillfully blending heredity and environment into the image of a monster. Surrounding this beast, moreover, are other characters of mixed blood whom the book describes as Chinese Negroes or "Chigroes," a veritable regiment of *mestizo* wickedness which must have made Kipling and his ilk rest content in their graves. . . .

Fear and distrust of the half-breed is an old device that panders well to the biases of an imperial people. That it should reappear in Fleming's works firmly supports the hypothesis that James Bond is very much old wine in new—and electronically sterilized—bottles.

ROBERT P. SECHLER

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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Styles in Anarchism

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

After reading Mr. Woodcock's observations about the anarchist creed of his youth [August] it occurred to me that the readers of COMMENTARY might be interested in a few remarks by a former "comrade" of his on that subject, which has again become timely in connection with the student movement, and particularly with the recent role of Daniel Cohn-Bendit.

I, too, was once active in the anarchist movement; it was at the turn of the century, more than sixty years ago. I, too, have lost most of the illusions which are the basis of the anarchist creed. I, too, have written a number of books on that subject and I, too, "crowned" my career as a teacher at some American universities.

But here the similarity of our experiences ends. Mr. Woodcock's anarchism was probably the reaction of a conscience-stricken gentleman (no offense intended) whose aesthetic sense was hurt by the ugliness of modern industrialism and who never departed from the path of law-abiding respectability. In short, he was in love with the beauty of the anarchist idea. My anarchism was that of an embittered déclassé, who had to study law—which he loathed—because in Catholic semi-absolutist Austria a Jew had no chance to teach either history or sociology unless he was baptized. So, as a protest, I embraced the romantic, then still bloodcurdling mystique of anarchism, with the result that I had to flee "my" country, to become a manual worker and even a "criminal," smuggling a harmless chemical (saccharine) in order to pay the printing expenses of a Swiss-German anarchist periodical, of which I was the illegal, anonymous, editor. Eventually I went to Tsarist Russia, where for some time I continued my underground activities.

At variance with Mr. Woodcock, I and some of my friends were inspired not by the beauty of the ideal which anarchism aspired to, but by grim hatred and lust for revenge. It was for this reason that we never took to those prophets of anarchism Mr. Woodcock seems to be particularly fond of—Godwin and Proudhon. We hated Proudhon, not only because he rejected revolutionary violence, but also because his vision of a glorious future was combined with such extremely reactionary prejudices as to make

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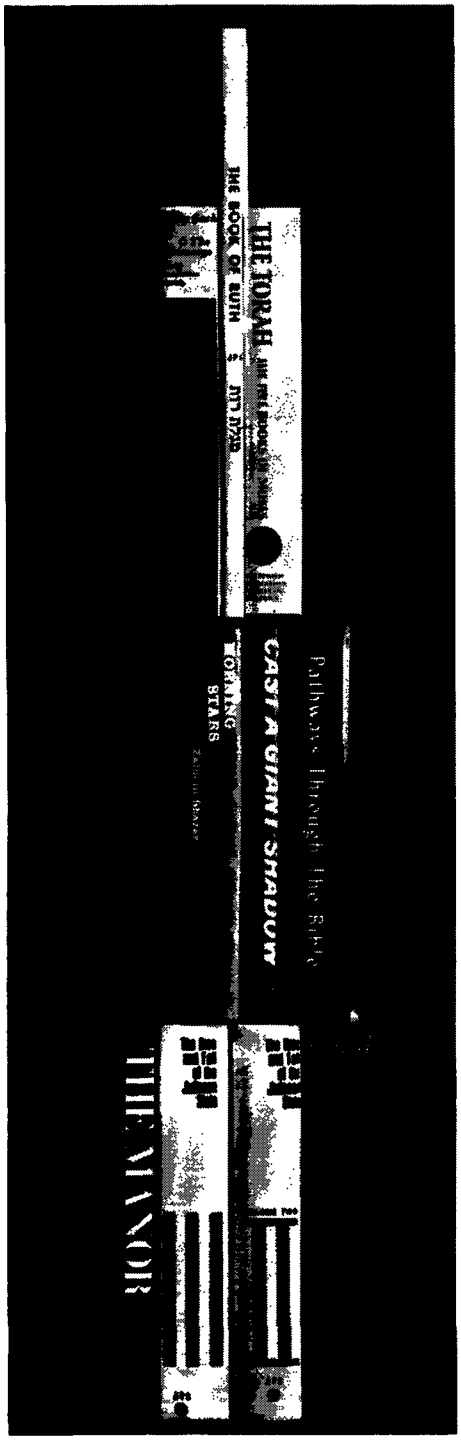

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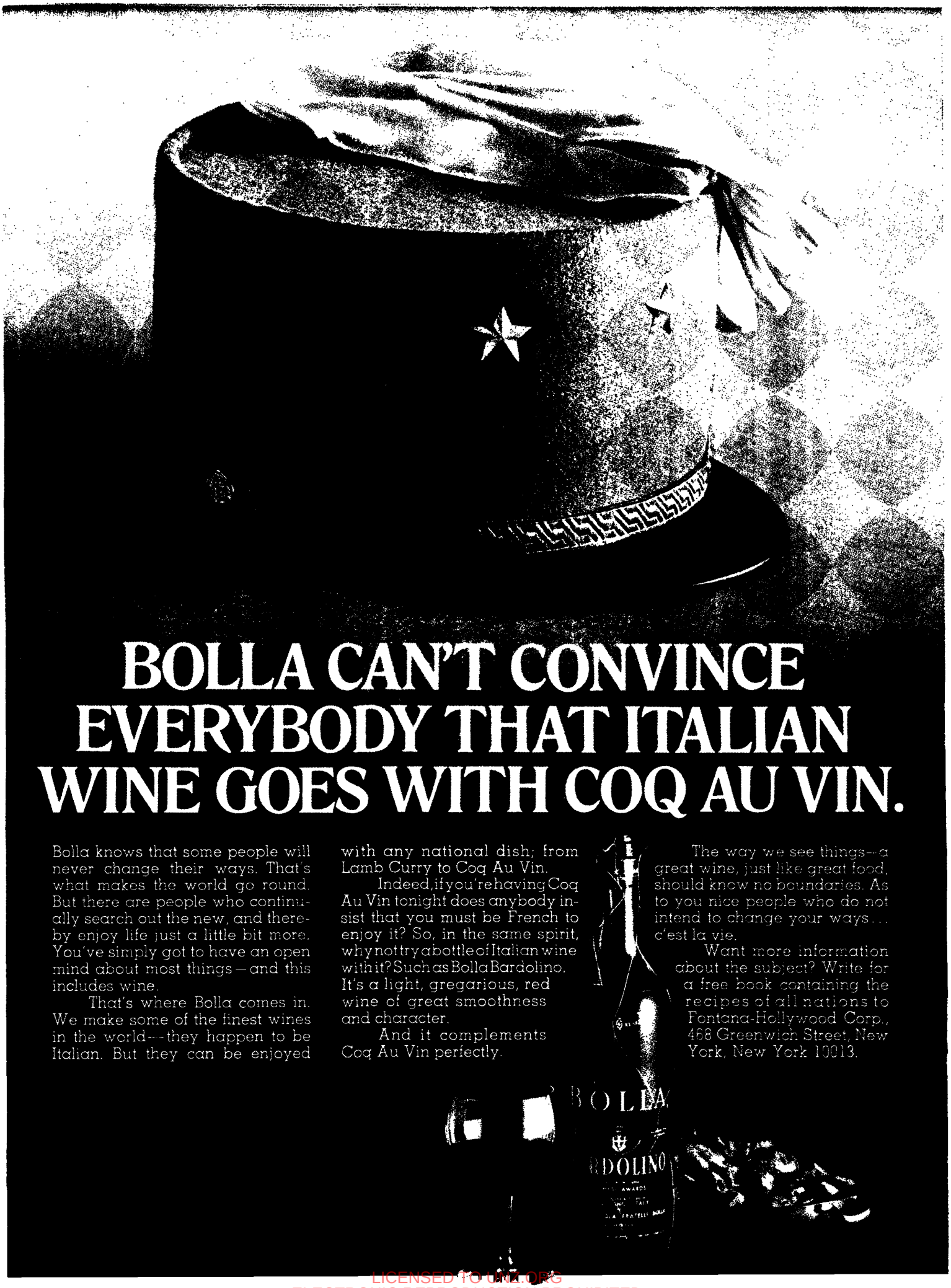

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one feel ashamed of the anarchist label which he coined. He actually believed in the *extermination* of the Jews, in the maintenance of Negro slavery in the United States, and in the reduction of all women to chaste household drudges. And there is plenty more in the same vein which, a few decades ago, made him the venerated darling of the French monarchists and fascists.

It would take too much space . . . to deal with all the aspects of Mr. Woodcock's peculiar anarchism-for-gentlemen. I'll refer only to a subject which Mr. Woodcock barely touched upon, but which to me seems most important of all: the reasons for the failure of anarchism ever to become a predominant force in the modern radical movement. (Spain of course is a special case, which I am dealing with in a book on anarchism that is now ready for publication.)

Aside from their choice of a suicidal label that did them more harm than all the slanders of their enemies, it was the misfortune of the anarchists that they appeared on the historical scene either too soon—as in the case of the Bakuninists, who, under the guise of a libertarian philosophy, aspired to a revolutionary dictatorship, such as was to be established 40 years after Bakunin's death by the followers of Lenin—or too late, as in the case of the post-Bakunin anarchists who, outside of Russia, were trying to convert the masses to a faraway ideal in a world in which anti-capitalist radicalism had already been preempted by the democratic Socialists and the trade unions controlled by them. In this world, the manual workers, because of their lack of education, could not understand or appreciate the difference between a future socialist state and a future anarchist non-state; then too, most radical intellectuals were not afraid of the possible authoritarian flaws of a socialist state in which they expected eventually to be office-holders and managers; and finally, radical malcontents were not interested in the verbal revolutionism of the anarchists, whether in matters of theory or tactics. . . .

And when, at last, after the October Revolution of 1917, the workers and the radical intellectuals were ready to listen to the bugle call of revolution, it was the Leninists who outbid the anarchists in radicalism by pointing to the anti-capitalist revolution they had carried out.

Having lost in the struggle both against the status quo and against their socialist and Communist competitors, those anarchists who still survive may have to console themselves with the thought that, in the words of Jean Jaurès, "history is a strange affray in which men who combat each other often serve the same cause." That cause is the inauguration of a planned collectivist economy, sometimes called "public ownership"—a system headed by an office-holding and managerial elite, operating either under a dictatorship as dreamed of by Marx, and first inaugurated by Lenin, or under a liberal multi-party setup, as aspired to by those democratic Socialists who have not become plain left-of-center politicians.

It is this version of public ownership which was shamefacedly accepted as a "transition" to their distant ideal by the more sophisticated or more sincere post-Bakunin anarchists after they had realized the futility of attempts to make an immediate revolution. That realization was coupled with the renunciation of the idea of an *anarchist* revolution whose absurdity or insincerity had become obvious to them. For a victorious anarchist revolution would mean the reorganization of the social system by an educated anarchist *minority* which, to "save the revolution," would have to establish a dictatorial regime. Such a revolutionary regime was no doubt on Bakunin's mind (he himself had once let the cat out of the bag by writing about the "invisible dictatorship" of his own following); but post-Bakunin anarchists, who had given up as unfeasible this allegedly anarchist proto-Bolshevik revolution, prefer not to talk about it.

So much for the "regular" post-Bakunin anarchists. The Spanish Revolution of the 1930's gave rise to a neo-Bakuninist crypto-dictatorial trend represented by the F.A.I. (Iberian Anarchist Federation), which, in 1933, made an attempt to seize power and to establish an anarchist dictatorship. Its views are now shared by an important faction of Italian anarchists . . . and are now also tacitly shared by those anarchists who happen to participate in the radical student movements now worrying the defenders of the status quo all over the world. . . .

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The New York Intellectuals

A Chronicle & A Critique

Irving Howe

WE DO NOT YET have a full-scale history of intellectuals in the United States, but when that book comes to be written one of its central themes will surely be that our intellectuals have done their work mostly in isolation. Even the groups we locate in the past—the Transcendentalists encircling Emerson, the writers and critics following Van Wyck Brooks during the *Seven Arts* period—are groups mainly by courtesy of retrospect. The figures we see within them were not nearly so close to one another in experience nor so allied in opinion as our need for historical reconstruction makes them out to have been. The kind of inner fraternity we associate with literary groups in Paris and London has rarely been characteristic of American intellectual life. It is hardly an accident that one of our most poignant cultural legends concerns the brief friendship between Hawthorne and Melville and then its long sequel of separation. Ours is a culture in which people rattle around.

A seeming exception is the group of writers who have come to be known, these past few decades, as the New York intellectuals. They appear to have a common history, prolonged now for more than thirty years; a common political outlook, even if marked by ceaseless internecine quarrels; a common style of thought and perhaps composition; a common focus of intellectual interests; and once you get past politeness—which becomes, these days, easier and easier—a common ethnic origin. They are, or until recently have been, anti-Communist; they are, or until some time ago were, radicals; they have a fondness for ideological speculation; they write literary criticism with a strong social emphasis; they revel in polemic; they strive self-consciously to be "brilliant"; and by birth or osmosis, they are Jews.

The New York intellectuals are perhaps the only group America has ever had that could be described as an *intelligentsia*. This term comes awkwardly to our lips, and for good reason: it suggests, as Martin Malia, a historian of Russian culture, writes, "more than intellectuals in the ordinary sense. Whether merely 'critical-thinking' or actively oppositional, their name indicates that [in Russia] they thought of themselves as the embodied 'intelligence' . . . or 'consciousness' of the nation. They clearly felt an exceptional sense of apartness from the society in which they lived."

Malia's phrase about "consciousness of the nation" seems special to the problems of the Russian intellectuals under Tsarism, but the rest of his description fits the New York intellectuals rather well: the stress upon "critical thinking," the stance of active opposition, the sense of apartness. Or perhaps more accurately, it is a description which fits the past of the New York intellectuals. And just as the Russian "intelligentsia" was marked by a strongly Westernizing outlook, a wish to bring Russian culture out of its provincial limits and into a close relationship with the culture of Western Europe, so the New York intellectuals have played a role in the internationalization of American culture, serving as a liaison between American readers and Russian politics, French ideas, European writing.

A more complicated approach to the problem of the intelligentsia is provided by Renato Poggioli in his book *The Theory of the Avant Garde*. He describes the Russian intelligentsia as "an intellectual order from the lower ranks . . . created by those who were rejected by other classes: an intellectual order whose function was not so much cultural as political. . . ." Poggioli remarks that in Russia the term referred to a "cultural proletariat," but

> these intellectuals are not so much prolertrian as proletarianizing . . . they may become ideologically and politically bound to the mass of workers and peasants but they are not, at bottom, an order economically bound to the interests of those masses. A member of the intelligentsia is not born but made.

I suspect there may be a contradiction between regarding the intelligentsia as an order "from the lower ranks" and concluding that a member of this order "is not born but made." But Poggioli's description is valuable insofar as it suggests that the intelligentsia is defined primarily by its position in society rather than by its relation to culture. Poggioli wishes sharply to distinguish the intelligentsia from an "intellectual elite," which he regards as a self-mobilized group whose *raison*

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d'être is a cultural attitude, and in our time, a positive commitment to modernist literature. In respect to late 19th- and early 20th-century Russia, this distinction is useful; when we turn to America, we are obviously dealing with loose analogies, yet useful ones too, for Poggioli's distinction should help us, a little later, to see the precise nature and limits of the New York intellectuals as a group.

Reflecting upon the experience of these writers, one begins to wonder whether—apart from a few years during the late 30's—they ever did constitute a coherent and self-defined group. The steady exchange of ideas, the reading of manuscripts, the preliminary discussion of work, all these characteristics of European intellectuals were not often evident in New York. On the contrary. In their work habits the New York intellectuals have mostly been loners, and in their relationships with one another, closer to the vision of life we associate with Hobbes than with Kropotkin. Repeatedly I have been struck by the way writers commonly associated with this group will hotly deny that it exists, or will say that if indeed it does exist they —*they!*—would not be so docile as to be part of it. Certain New York intellectuals like Harold Rosenberg and Lionel Abel have never been very strong in sentiments of group fraternity; and Rosenberg, in the course of a polemic against other New York writers, once coined the memorable phrase, "a herd of independent minds." Some, like myself, have seen themselves as only in part and then ambivalently related, since we are also caught up with a separate political milieu.* After a time, in Europe, it became a source of pride for writers to say they had once been associated with the Bloomsbury group or the *Scrutiny* critics or the socialists led by Gorky before the Revolution; but for whatever reasons, that point has not been reached among the New York writers. I doubt that it ever will be. Contentious and, by virtue of their origins and history, uncertain as to their relationship with American culture, the New York intellectuals wish, so far as I can tell, to form a loose and unacknowledged tribe.

Yet the mere fact that there does exist a commonly-shared perception of a New York intellectual group, even if that perception is held mainly by hostile academics and a parasitic mass media, must be taken as decisive. That people "out there" believe in the reality of the New York group, makes it a reality of sorts. And in all candor there is something else: the New York writers dislike being labeled, they can speak bitterly about each other's work and opinions, they may not see one another from year's start to year's end, but they are nervously alert to one another's judgments. *Attention is paid*—whether from warranted respect or collective vanity or provincial narrowness, it hardly matters.

Such groups approach a fragile state of coherence only at the point where writers are coming together and the point where they are drifting apart. Especially does this seem true at the end, when there comes that tremor of self-awareness which no one would have troubled to feel during the years of energy and confidence. A tradition in process of being lost, a generation facing assault and ridicule from ambitious younger men—the rekindled sense of group solidarity is brought to a half-hour's flame by the hardness of dying. And it is at such moments that the mass media, never more than twenty years late, become aware of the problem: their publicity signals recognition and recognition a certificate of death.

II

THE SOCIAL ROOTS of the New York writers are not hard to trace. With a few delightful exceptions—a tendril from Yale, a vine from Seattle—they stem from the world of the immigrant Jews, either workers or petty bourgeois.† They come at a moment in the development of immigrant Jewish culture when there is a strong drive not only to break out of the ghetto but also to leave behind the bonds of Jewishness entirely. Earlier generations had known such feelings, and through many works of fiction, especially those by Henry Roth, Michael Gold, and Daniel Fuchs, one can return to the classic pattern of a fierce attachment to the provincialism of origins as it becomes entangled with a fierce eagerness to plunge into the Gentile world of success, manners, freedom. As early as the 1890's this pattern had already come into view, and with diminishing intensity it has continued to control Jewish life deep into the 20th century; perhaps its last sig-

* Is it "they" or "we"? To speak of the New York intellectuals as "they" might seem coy or disloyal; to speak of "we" self-assertive or cozy. Well, let it be "they," with the proviso that I do not thereby wish, even if I could, to exempt myself from judgment.

† In placing this emphasis on the Jewish origins of the New York intellectuals, I am guilty of a certain—perhaps unavoidable—compression of the realities. Were I writing a book rather than an essay, I would have to describe in some detail the relationship between the intellectuals who came on the scene in the 30's and those of earlier periods. There were significant ties between *Partisan Review* and *The Dial*, *Politics* and the *Masses*. But I choose here to bypass this historical connection because I wish to stress what has been distinctive and perhaps unique.

A similar qualification has to be made concerning those intellectuals who have been associated with this milieu but have not been Jewish. I am working on the premise that in background and style there was something decidedly Jewish about the intellectuals who began to cohere as a group around *Partisan Review* in the late 30's—and one of the things that was "decidedly Jewish" was that most were of Jewish birth! Perhaps it ought to be said, then, that my use of the phrase "New York intellectuals" is simply a designation of convenience. I don't mean to suggest that there have been or will be no other intellectuals in New York. I am using the phrase as a shorthand for what might awkwardly be spelled out as "the intellectuals of New York who began to appear in the 30's, most of whom were Jewish."

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nificant expression comes in Philip Roth's stories, where the sense of Jewish tradition is feeble but the urge to escape its suburban ruins extremely strong.

The New York intellectuals were the first group of Jewish writers to come out of the immigrant milieu who did not define themselves through a relationship, nostalgic or hostile, to memories of Jewishness. They were the first generation of Jewish writers for whom the recall of an immigrant childhood does not seem to have been completely overwhelming. (Is that perhaps one reason few of them tried to write fiction?) That this severance from Jewish roots and immigrant sources would later come to seem a little suspect, is another matter. All I wish to stress here is that, precisely at the point in the 30's when the New York intellectuals began to form themselves into a loose cultural-political tendency, Jewishness as idea and sentiment played no significant role in their expectations—apart, to be sure, from a bitter awareness that no matter what their political or cultural desires, the sheer fact of their recent emergence had still to be regarded, and not least of all by themselves, as an event within Jewish American life.

For decades the life of the East European Jews, both in the old country and the new, might be compared to a tightly-gathered spring, trembling with unused force, which had been held in check until the climactic moment of settlement in America. Then the energies of generations came bursting out, with an ambition that would range from pure to coarse, disinterested to vulgar, and indeed would mix all these together, but finally—this ambition—would count for more as an absolute release than in any of its local manifestations. What made Sammy run was partly that his father and his father's father had been bound hand and foot. And in all the New York intellectuals there was and had to be a fraction of Sammy. All were driven by a sense of striving, a thrust of will, an unspoken conviction that time had now to be regained.

The youthful experiences described by Alfred Kazin in his autobiography are, apart from his distinctive outcroppings of temperament, more or less typical of the experiences of many New York intellectuals—except, at one or two points, for the handful that involved itself deeply in the radical movement. It is my impression, however, that Kazin's affectionate stress on the Jewish sources of his experience is mainly a feeling of retrospect, mainly a recognition in the 50's and 60's that no matter how you might try to shake off your past, it would still cling to your speech, gestures, skin and nose, it would still shape, with a thousand subtle movements, the way you did your work and raised your children. In the 30's, however, it was precisely the idea of discarding the past, breaking away from families, traditions, and memories which excited intellectuals. They meant to declare themselves citizens of the world and, that succeeding, perhaps consider becoming writers of this country.

The Jewish immigrant world branded upon its sons and daughters marks of separateness even while encouraging them to dreams of universalism. This subculture may have been formed to preserve ethnic continuity, but it was the kind of continuity that would reach its triumph in self-disintegration. It taught its children both to conquer the Gentile world and to be conquered by it, both to leave an intellectual impress and to accept the dominant social norms. By the 20's and 30's the values dominating Jewish immigrant life were mostly secular, radical, and universalist, and if these were often conveyed through a parochial vocabulary, they nonetheless carried some remnants of European culture. Even as they were moving out of a constricted immigrant milieu, the New York intellectuals were being prepared by it for the tasks they would set themselves during the 30's. They were being prepared for the intellectual vocation as one of assertiveness, speculation, and free-wheeling; for the strategic maneuvers of a vanguard, at this point almost a vanguard in the abstract, with no ranks following in the rear; and for the union of politics and culture, with the politics radical and the culture cosmopolitan. What made this goal all the more attractive was that the best living American critic, Edmund Wilson, had triumphantly reached it: he was the author of both *The Triple Thinkers* and *To the Finland Station*, he served as a model for emulation, and he gave this view of the intellectual life a special authority in that he seemed to come out of the mainstream of American life.

That the literary avant garde and the political Left were not really comfortable partners would become clear with the passage of time; in Europe it already had. But during the years the New York intellectuals began to appear as writers and critics worthy of some attention, there was a feeling in the air that a union of *the advanced*—critical consciousness and political conscience—could be forged.

Throughout the 30's the New York intellectuals believed, somewhat naively, that this union was not only a desirable possibility but a tie both natural and appropriate. Except, however, for the Surrealists in Paris, and it is not clear how seriously this instance should be taken, the paths of political radicalism and cultural modernism have seldom met. To use Poggioli's terms, the New York writers were more an "intelligentsia" than an "intellectual elite," and more inclined to an amorphous "proletarianizing" than to an austere partisanship for modernism.

THE HISTORY of the West in the last century offers many instances in which Jewish intellectuals played an important

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role in the development of political radicalism; but almost always this occurred when there were sizable movements, with the intellectuals serving as spokesmen, propagandists, and functionaries of a party. In New York, by contrast, the intellectuals had no choice but to begin with a dissociation from the only significant radical movement in this country, the Communist party. What for European writers like Koestler, Silone, and Malraux would be the end of the road was here a beginning. In a fairly short time, the New York writers found that the meeting of political and cultural ideas which had stirred them to excitement could also leave them stranded and distressed. Radicalism, in both its daily practice and ethical biases, proved inhospitable to certain aspects of modernism—and not always, I now think, mistakenly. Literary modernism often had a way of cavalierly dismissing the world of daily existence, a world that remained intensely absorbing to the New York writers. Literary modernism could sometimes align itself with reactionary movements, a fact that was intensely embarrassing and required either torturous explanations or complex dissociations. The New York writers discovered, as well, that their relationship to modernism as a purely literary phenomenon was less authoritative and more ambiguous than they had wished to feel. The great battles for Joyce and Eliot and Proust had been fought in the 20's and mostly won; and now, while clashes with entrenched philistinism might still take place, they were mostly skirmishes or mopping-up operations (as in the polemics against the transfigured Van Wyck Brooks). The New York writers came at the end of the modernist experience, just as they came at what may yet have to be judged the end of the radical experience, and as they certainly came at the end of the Jewish experience. One shorthand way of describing their situation, a cause of both their feverish brilliance and their recurrent instability, is to say that *they came late.*

During the 30's and 40's their radicalism was anxious, problematic, and beginning to decay at the very moment it was adopted. They had no choice: the crisis of socialism was worldwide, profound, with no end in sight, and the only way to avoid that crisis was to bury oneself, as a few did, in the left-wing sects. Some of the New York writers had gone through the "political school" of Stalinism, a training in coarseness from which not all recovered; some had even spent a short time in the organizational coils of the Communist party. By 1936, when the anti-Stalinist *Partisan Review* was conceived, the central figures of that moment—Philip Rahv, William Phillips, Sidney Hook—had shed whatever sympathies they once felt for Stalinism, but the hope that they could find another ideological system, some cleansed version of Marxism associated perhaps with Trotsky or Luxemburg, was doomed to failure. Some gravitated for a year or two toward the Trotskyist group, but apart from admiration for Trotsky's personal qualities and dialectical prowess, they found little satisfaction there; no version of orthodox Marxism could retain a hold on intellectuals who had gone through the trauma of abandoning the Leninist *Weltanschauung* and had experienced the depth to which the politics of this century, most notably the rise of totalitarianism, called into question the once-sacred Marxist categories. From now on, the comforts of system would have to be relinquished.

Though sometimes brilliant in expression and often a stimulus to the kind of cultural speculation at which they excelled, the radicalism of the New York intellectuals during the 30's was not a deeply-grounded experience. It lacked roots in a popular movement which might bring intellectuals into relationship with the complexities of power and stringencies of organization. From a doctrine it became a style, and from a style a memory. It was symptomatic that the *Marxist Quarterly,* started in 1937 by a spectrum of Left intellectuals and probably the most distinguished Marxist journal ever published in this country, could survive no more than a year. The differences among its founders, some like James Burnham holding to a revolutionary Marxist line and others like Sidney Hook and Lewis Corey moving toward versions of liberalism and social democracy, proved too severe for collaboration. And even the radicalism of the *Partisan Review* editors and writers during its vivid early years—how deeply did it cut, except as a tool enabling them to break away from Marxism? Which of those writers and readers who now look back nostalgically have troubled to examine the early files of this important magazine and read—with embarrassment? amusement? pleasure?—the political essays it printed?

YET IF THE radicalism of the New York intellectuals seems to have been without much political foundation or ideological strength, it certainly played an important role in their own development. For the New York writers, and even I suspect those among them who would later turn sour on the whole idea of radicalism (including the few who in the mid-60's would try to erase the memory of having turned sour), the 30's represented a time of intensity and fervor, a reality or illusion of engagement, a youth tensed with conviction and assurance: so that even Dwight Macdonald, who at each point in his life has made a specialty out of mocking his previous beliefs, could not help displaying tender feelings upon remembering his years, God help us, as a "revolutionist." The radicalism of the 30's gave the New York intellectuals their distinctive style: a flair for polemic, a taste for the grand generalization, an impatience with what they regarded (often parochially) as parochial scholarship, an internationalist perspective, and a tacit belief in

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the unity—even if a unity beyond immediate reach—of intellectual work.

By comparison with competing schools of thought, the radicalism of the anti-Stalinist Left, as it was then being advanced in *Partisan Review,* seemed cogent, fertile, alive: it could stir good minds to argument, it could gain the attention of writers abroad, it seemed to offer a combination of system and independence. With time the anti-Stalinist intellectuals came to enjoy advantages somewhat like those which have enabled old radicals to flourish in the trade unions: they could talk faster than anyone else, they knew their way around better, they were quicker on their feet. Brief and superficial as their engagement with Marxism may have been, it gave the intellectuals the advantage of dialectic, sometimes dialectic as it lapsed into mere double-talk.

Yet in fairness I should add that this radicalism did achieve something of substantial value in the history of American culture. It helped destroy—once and for all, I would have said until recently—Stalinism as a force in our intellectual life, and with Stalinism those varieties of populist sentimentality which the Communist movement of the late 30's exploited with notable skill. If certain sorts of manipulative soft-headedness have been all but banished from serious American writing, and the kinds of rhetoric once associated with Archibald MacLeish and Van Wyck Brooks cast into permanent disrepute, at least some credit for this ought to go to the New York writers.

IT HAS RECENTLY become fashionable, especially in the pages of the *New York Review of Books,* to sneer at the achievements of anti-Stalinism by muttering darkly about "the cold war." But we ought to have enough respect for the past at least to avoid telescoping several decades. The major battle against Stalinism as a force within intellectual life, and in truth a powerful force, occurred before anyone heard of the cold war; it occurred in the late 30's and early 40's. In our own moment we see "the old crap," as Marx once called it, rise to the surface with unnerving ease; there is something dizzying in an encounter with Stalin's theory of "social fascism," particularly when it comes from the lips of young people who may not even be quite sure when Stalin lived. Still, I think there will not and probably cannot be repeated in our intellectual life the ghastly large-scale infatuation with a totalitarian regime which disgraced the 30's. Some achievements, a very few, seem beyond destruction.

A little credit is therefore due. Whatever judgments one may have about Sidney Hook's later political writings, and mine have been very critical, it is a matter of decency to recall the liberating role he played in the 30's as spokesman for a democratic radicalism and a fierce opponent of all the rationalizations for totalitarianism a good many intellectuals allowed themselves. One reason people have recently felt free to look down their noses at "anti-Communism" as if it were a mass voodoo infecting everyone from far Right to democratic Left, is precisely the toughness with which the New York intellectuals fought against Stalinism. Neither they nor anybody else could reestablish socialism as a viable politics in the United States; but for a time they did help to salvage the honor of the socialist idea—which meant primarily to place it in the sharpest opposition to all totalitarian states and systems. What many intellectuals now say they take for granted, had first to be won through bitter and exhausting struggle.

I should not like to give the impression that Stalinism was the beginning and end of whatever was detestable in American intellectual life during the 30's. Like the decades to come, perhaps like all decades, this was a "low dishonest" time. No one who grew up in, or lived through, these years should wish for a replay of their ideological melodramas. Nostalgia for the 30's is a sentiment possible only to the very young or the very old, those who have not known and those who no longer remember. Whatever distinction can be assigned to the New York intellectuals during the 30's lies mainly in their persistence as a small minority, in their readiness to defend unpopular positions against apologists for the Moscow trials and the vigilantism of Popular Front culture. Some historians, with the selectivity of retrospect, have recently begun to place the New York intellectuals at the center of cultural life in the 30's—but this is both a comic misapprehension and a soiling honor. On the contrary; their best hours were spent on the margin, in opposition.

Later, in the 40's and 50's, most of the New York intellectuals would abandon the effort to find a renewed basis for a socialist politics—to their serious discredit, I believe. Some would vulgarize anti-Stalinism into a politics barely distinguishable from reaction. Yet for almost all New York intellectuals the radical years proved a decisive moment in their lives. And for a very few, the decisive moment.

I have been speaking here as if the New York intellectuals were mainly political people, but in reality this was true for only a few of them, writers like Hook, Macdonald, and perhaps Rahv. Most were literary men or journalists with no experience in any political movement; they had come to radical politics through the pressures of conscience and a flair for the dramatic; and even in later years, when they abandoned any direct political involvement, they would in some sense remain "political." They would maintain an alertness toward the public event. They would respond with eagerness to historical changes, even if these promised renewed favor for the very ideas they had largely discarded. They would continue to structure their cultural responses

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through a sharp, perhaps excessively sharp, kind of categorization, in itself a sign that political styles and habits persisted. But for the most part, the contributions of the New York intellectuals were not to political thought. Given the brief span of time during which they fancied themselves agents of a renewed Marxism, there was little they could have done. Sidney Hook wrote one or two excellent books on the sources of Marxism, Harold Rosenberg one or two penetrating essays on the dramatics of Marxism; and not much more. The real contribution of the New York writers was toward creating a new, and for this country almost exotic, style of work. They thought of themselves as cultural radicals even after they had begun to wonder whether there was much point in remaining political radicals. But what could this mean? Cultural radicalism was a notion extremely hard to define and perhaps impossible to defend, as Richard Chase would discover in the late 50's, when against the main drift of New York opinion he put forward the idea of a radicalism without immediate political ends but oriented toward criticism of a meretricious culture. What Chase did not live long enough to see was that his idea, much derided at the time, would lend itself a decade later to caricature through success.

Chase was seriously trying to preserve a major impetus of New York intellectual life: the exploration and defense of literary modernism.* He failed to see, however, that this was a task largely fulfilled and, in any case, taking on a far more ambiguous and less militant character in the 50's than it would have had twenty or thirty years earlier. The New York writers had done useful work in behalf of modernist literature. Without fully realizing it, they were continuing a cultural movement that had begun in the United States during the mid-19th century: the return to Europe, not as provincials knocking humbly at the doors of the great, but as equals in an enterprise which by its very nature had to be international. We see this at work in Howells's reception of Ibsen and Tolstoy; in Van Wyck Brooks's use of European models to assault the timidities of American literature; in the responsiveness of *The Little Review* and *The Dial* to European experiments; and somewhat paradoxically, in the later fixation of the New Critics, despite an ideology of cultural provincialism, on modernist writing from abroad.

The New York critics, and most notably *Partisan Review*, helped complete this process of internationalizing American culture (also, by the way, Americanizing international culture). They gave a touch of glamor to that style which the Russians and Poles now call "cosmopolitan." *Partisan Review* was the first journal in which it was not merely respectable but a matter of pride to print one of Eliot's *Four Quartets* side by side with Marxist criticism. And not only did the magazine break down the polar rigidities of the hard-line Marxists and the hard-line nativists; it also sanctioned the idea, perhaps the most powerful cultural idea of the last half century, that there existed an all but incomparable generation of modern masters, some of them still alive, who in this terrible age represented the highest possibilities of the human imagination. On a more restricted scale, *Partisan Review* helped win attention and respect for a generation of European writers—Silone, Orwell, Malraux, Koestler, Serge—who were not quite of the first rank as novelists but had yielded themselves to and suffered the failure of socialism.

If the *Partisan* critics came too late for a direct encounter with new work from the modern masters, they did serve the valuable end of placing that work in a cultural context more vital and urgent than could be provided by any other school of American criticism. For many young people up to and through the Second World War, the *Partisan* critics helped to mold a new sensibility, a mixture of rootless radicalism and a desanctified admiration for writers like Joyce, Eliot, and Kafka. I can recall that even in my orthodox Marxist phase I felt that the central literary expression of the time was a now half-forgotten poem by a St. Louis writer called "The Wasteland."

In truth, however, the New York critics were then performing no more than an auxiliary service. They were following upon the work of earlier, more fortunate critics. And even in the task of cultural consolidation, which soon had the unhappy result of overconsolidating the modern masters in the academy, the New York critics found important allies among their occasional opponents in the New Criticism. As it turned out, the commitment to literary modernism proved insufficient either as a binding literary purpose or as a theme that might inform the writings of the New York critics. By now modernism was entering its period of decline; the old excitements had paled and the old achievements been registered. Modernism had become successful; it was no longer a literature of opposition, and thereby had begun that metamorphosis signifying its ultimate death. The problem was no longer to fight for modernism, the problem was now to consider why the fight had so easily ended in triumph. And as time went on, modernism surfaced an increasing portion of its limitations and ambiguities, so that among some critics earlier passions of advocacy gave way to increasing anxieties of judgment. Yet the moment had certainly not come when a cool and objective reconsideration could be undertaken of works that had formed the sensibility of our time. The New York critics, like many

* In a lengthy essay printed in this journal, "The Culture of Modernism," November 1967, I have tried to suggest what this term can signify.

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others, were trapped in a dilemma from which no escape could be found but which lent itself to brilliant improvisation: it was too late for unobstructed enthusiasm, it was too soon for unobstructed valuation, and meanwhile the literary work that was being published, though sometimes distinguished, was composed in the heavy shadows of the modernists. At almost every point this work betrayed the marks of *having come after.*

Except for Harold Rosenberg, who would make "the tradition of the new" a signature of his criticism, the New York writers slowly began to release those sentiments of uneasiness they had been harboring about the modernist poets and novelists. One instance was the notorious Pound case,* in which literary and moral values, if not jammed into a head-on collision, were certainly entangled beyond easy separation. Essays on writers like D. H. Lawrence—what to make of his call for "blood consciousness," what one's true response might be to his notions of the leader cult—began to appear. A recent book by John Harrison, *The Reactionaries,* which contains a full-scale attack on the politics of several modernist writers, is mostly a compilation of views that had been gathering force over the last few decades. And then, as modernism stumbled into its late period, those recent years in which its early energies have evidently reached a point of exhaustion, the New York critics became still more discomfited. There was a notable essay several years ago by Lionel Trilling in which he acknowledged mixed feelings toward the modernist writers he had long praised and taught. There was a cutting attack by Philip Rahv on Jean Genet, a perverse genius in whose fiction the compositional resources of modernism seem all but severed from its moral—one might even say, its human—interests. And more recently there has been an essay by myself ending with the gloomy expectation that no dignified funeral awaits modernism, only noisy prolongation "in publicity and sensation, the kind of savage parody which may indeed be the only fate worse than death."

For the New York intellectuals in the 30's and 40's there was still another focus of interest, never quite as strong as radical politics or literary modernism but seeming, for a brief time, to promise a valuable new line of discussion. In the essays of writers like Clement Greenberg and Dwight Macdonald, more or less influenced by the German neo-Marxist school of Adorno-Horkheimer, there were beginnings at a theory of "mass culture," that mass-produced pseudo-art characteristic of industrialized urban society, together with its paralyzed audiences, its inaccessible sources, its parasitic relation to high culture. More insight than system and more intuition than knowledge, this slender body of work, which appeared mostly in *Politics* and COMMENTARY, was nevertheless a contribution to the study of that hazy area where culture and society meet. It was attacked by writers like Edward Shils as being haughtily elitist, on the ground that it assumed a condescension to the tastes and experiences of the masses. It was attacked by writers like Harold Rosenberg, who charged that only people taking a surreptitious pleasure in dipping their noses into trash would study the "content" (he had no objection to sociological investigations) of mass culture. Even at its most penetrating, the criticism of mass culture was beset by uncertainty and improvisation; perhaps all necessary for a beginning.

Then, almost as if by common decision, the whole subject was dropped. For years hardly a word could be found in the advanced journals about what a little earlier had been called a crucial problem of the modern era. One reason was that the theory advanced by Greenberg and Macdonald turned out to be static: it could be stated but apparently not developed. It suffered from weaknesses parallel to those of Hannah Arendt's theory of totalitarianism: by positing a *cul de sac,* a virtual end of days, for 20th-century man and his culture it proposed a suffocating relationship between high or minority culture and the ever-multiplying mass culture. From this relationship there seemed neither relief nor escape, and if one accepted this view, nothing remained but to refine the theory and keep adding grisly instances.

IN THE ABSENCE of more complex speculations, there was little point in continuing to write about mass culture. Besides, hostility toward the commercial pseudo-arts was hard to maintain with unyielding intensity, mostly because it was hard to remain all that *interested* in them—only in Macdonald's essays did both hostility and interest survive intact. Some felt that the whole matter had been inflated and that writers should stick to their business, which was literature, and intellectuals to theirs, which was ideas. Others felt that the movies and TV were beginning to show more ingenuity and resourcefulness than the severe notions advanced by Greenberg and Macdonald allowed for—though no one could have anticipated that glorious infatuation with trash which Marshall McLuhan would make acceptable. And still others felt that the multiplication of insights, even if pleasing as an exercise, failed to yield significant results: a critic who contributes a nuance to Dostoevsky criticism is working within a structured tradition, while one who throws off a clever observation about Little Orphan Annie is simply showing that he can do what he has done.

There was another and more political reason

* In 1948 Ezra Pound, who had spent the war years as a propagandist for Mussolini and whose writings contained strongly anti-Semitic passages, was awarded the prestigious Bollingen Prize. The committee voting for this award contained a number of ranking American poets. After the award was announced, there occurred in the pages of *Partisan Review,* COMMENTARY, and other journals a harsh dispute as to its appropriateness.

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for the collapse of mass culture criticism. One incentive toward this kind of writing was the feeling that industrial society had reached a point of affluent stasis where no major upheavals could now be registered much more vividly in culture than in economics. While aware of the dangers of reductionism here, I think the criticism of mass culture did serve, as some of *its* critics charged, conveniently to replace the criticism of bourgeois society. If you couldn't stir the proletariat to action, you could denounce Madison Avenue in comfort. Once, however, it began to be felt among intellectuals in the 50's that there was no longer so overwhelming a need for political criticism, and then, at the other pole, once it began to seem in the 60's that there were new openings for political criticism, the appetite for cultural surrogates became less keen.

Greenberg now said little more about mass culture; Macdonald made no serious effort to extend his theory or test it against new events; and in recent years, younger writers have seemed to feel that the whole approach of these men was heavy and humorless. An influential critic like Susan Sontag has proposed a cheerfully eclectic view which undercuts just about everything written from the Greenberg-Macdonald position. Now everyone is to do "his thing," high, middle, or low; the old puritan habit of interpretation and judgment, so inimical to sensuousness, gives way to a programmed receptivity; and thus we are enlightened by lengthy studies of the ethos of the Beatles.

By the end of the Second World War, the New York writers had reached a point of severe intellectual crisis, though as frequently happens at such moments, they themselves often felt they were entering a phase of enlarged influence and power. Perhaps indeed there was a relation between inner crisis and external influence. Everything that had kept them going—the idea of socialism, the advocacy of literary modernism, the assault on mass culture, a special brand of literary criticism—was judged to be irrelevant to the postwar years. But as a group, just at the time their internal disintegration had seriously begun, the New York writers could be readily identified. The leading critics were Rahv, Phillips, Trilling, Rosenberg, Abel, and Kazin. The main political theorist was Hook. Writers of poetry and fiction related to the New York milieu were Delmore Schwartz, Saul Bellow, Paul Goodman, and Isaac Rosenfeld. And the recognized scholar, as also inspiring moral force, was Meyer Schapiro.

III

A SHARP TURN occurs, or is completed, soon after the Second World War. The intellectuals now go racing or stumbling from idea to idea, notion to notion, hope to hope, fashion to fashion. This instability often derives from a genuine eagerness to capture all that seems new—or threatening—in experience, sometimes from a mere desire to capture a bitch-goddess whose first name is Novelty. The abandonment of ideology can be liberating: a number of talents, thrown back on their own resources, begin to grow. The surrender of "commitment" can be damaging: some writers find themselves rattling about in a gray and chilly freedom. The culture opens up, with both temptation and generosity, and together with intellectual anxieties there are public rewards, often deserved. A period of dispersion; extreme oscillations in thought; and a turn in politics toward an increasingly conservative kind of liberalism—reflective, subtle, acquiescent.

The postwar years were marked by a sustained discussion of the new political and intellectual problems raised by the totalitarian state. Nothing in received political systems, neither Marxist nor liberal, adequately prepared one for the frightful mixture of terror and ideology, the capacity to sweep along the plebeian masses and organize a warfare state, and above all the readiness to destroy entire peoples, which characterized totalitarianism. Still less was anyone prepared—who had heeded the warning voices of the Russian socialist Martov or the English liberal Russell?—for the transformation of the revolutionary Bolshevik state, either through a "necessary" degeneration or an internal counterrevolution, into one of the major totalitarian powers. Marxist theories of fascism—the "last stage" of capitalism, with the economy statified to organize a permanent war machine and mass terror employed to put down rebellious workers—came to seem, if not entirely mistaken, then certainly insufficient. The quasi- or pseudo-Leninist notion that "bourgeois democracy" was merely a veiled form of capitalist domination, no different in principle from its open dictatorship, proved to be a moral and political disaster. The assumption that socialism was an ordained "next step," or that nationalization of industry constituted a sufficient basis for working-class rule, was as great a disaster. No wonder intellectual certainties were shattered and these years marked by frenetic improvisation! At every point, with the growth of Communist power in Europe and with the manufacture of the Bomb at home, apocalypse seemed the name of tomorrow.

So much foolishness and malice has been written about the New York intellectuals and their anti-Communism, either by those who have signed a separate peace with the authoritarian idea or those who lack the courage to defend what *is* defensible in their own past, that I want here to be both blunt and unyielding.

Given the enormous growth of Russian power after the Second World War and the real possibility of a Communist takeover in Europe, the in-

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tellectuals—and not they alone—had to reconsider their political responses.* An old-style Marxist declaration of rectitude, a plague repeated on both their houses? Or the difficult position of making foreign policy proposals for the United States, while maintaining criticism of its social order, so as to block totalitarian expansion without resort to war? Most intellectuals decided they had to choose the second course, and as far as that goes, I think they were right.

Like anti-capitalism, anti-Communism was a tricky politics, all too open to easy distortion. Like anti-capitalism, anti-Communism could be put to the service of ideological racketeering and reaction. Just as ideologues of the fanatic Right insisted that by some ineluctable logic anti-capitalism led to a Stalinist terror, so ideologues of the authoritarian Left, commandeering the same logic, declared that anti-Communism led to the politics of Dulles and Rusk. There is, of course, no "anti-capitalism" or "anti-Communism" in the abstract; these take on political flesh only when linked with a larger body of programs and values, so that it becomes clear what *kind* of "anti-capitalism" or "anti-Communism" we are dealing with. It is absurd, and indeed disreputable, for intellectuals in the 60's to write as if there were a unified "anti-Communism" which can be used to enclose the views of everyone from William Buckley to Michael Harrington.

There were difficulties. A position could be worked out for conditional support of the West when it defended Berlin or introduced the Marshall Plan or provided economic help to underdeveloped countries; but in the course of daily politics, in the effort to influence the foreign policy of what remained a capitalist power, intellectuals could lose their independence and slip into vulgarities of analysis and speech.

Painful choices had to be faced. When the Hungarian revolution broke out in 1956, most intellectuals sympathized strongly with the rebels yet feared that active intervention by the West might provoke a world war. For a rational and humane mind, anti-Communism could not be the sole motive, it could only be one of several, in political behavior and policy; and even those intellectuals who had by now swung a considerable distance to the Right did not advocate military intervention in Hungary. There was simply no way out—as, just recently, there was none in Czechoslovakia.

It became clear, furthermore, that U.S. military intervention in underdeveloped countries could help local reactionaries in the short run, and the Communists in the long run. These difficulties were inherent in postwar politics, and they ruled out—though for that very reason, also made tempting—a simplistic moralism. These difficulties were also exacerbated by the spread among intellectuals of a crude anti-Communism, often ready to justify whatever the U.S. might do at home and abroad. For a hard-line group within the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, all that seemed to matter in any strongly-felt way was a sour hatred of the Stalinists, historically justifiable but more and more a political liability even in the fight against Stalinism. The dangers in such a politics now seem all too obvious, but I should note, for whatever we may mean by the record, that in the early 50's they were already being pointed out by a mostly unheeded minority of intellectuals around *Dissent*. Yet, with all these qualifications registered, the criticism to be launched against the New York intellectuals in the postwar years is not that they were strongly anti-Communist but rather that many of them, through disorientation or insensibility, allowed their anti-Communism to become something cheap and illiberal.

NOR IS THE MAIN point of *moral* criticism that the intellectuals abandoned socialism. We have no reason to suppose that the declaration of a socialist opinion induces a greater humaneness than does acquiescence in liberalism. It could be argued (I would) that in the ease with which ideas of socialism were now brushed aside there was something shabby. It was undignified, at the very least, for people who had made so much of their Marxist credentials now to put to rest so impatiently the radicalism of their youth. Still, it might be said by some of the New York writers that reality itself had forced them to conclude socialism was no longer viable or had become irrelevant to the American scene, and that while this conclusion might be open to political argument, it was not to moral attack.

Let us grant that for a moment. What cannot be granted is that the shift in ideologies required or warranted the surrender of critical independence which was prevalent during the 50's. In the trauma—or relief—of ideological ricochet, all too many intellectuals joined the American celebration. It was possible, to cite but one of many instances, for Mary McCarthy to write: "Class barriers disappear or tend to become porous [in the U.S.]; the factory worker is an economic aristocrat in comparison with the middle-class clerk. . . .

* Some recent historians, under New Left inspiration, have argued that in countries like France and Italy the possibility of a Communist seizure of power was really quite small. Perhaps; counter-factuals are hard to dispose of. What matters is the political consequences these historians would retrospectively have us draw, if they were at all specific on this point. Was it erroneous, or reactionary, to believe that resistance had to be created in Europe against further Communist expansion? What attitude, for example, would they have had intellectuals, or anyone else, take during the Berlin crisis? Should the city, in the name of peace, have been yielded to the East Germans? Did the possibility of Communist victories in Western Europe require an extraordinary politics? And to what extent are present reconsiderations of Communist power in postwar Europe made possible by the fact that it was, in fact, successfully contained?

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*The America . . . of vast inequalities and dramatic contrasts is rapidly ceasing to exist"** (emphasis added). Because the New York writers all but surrendered their critical perspective on American society—*that* is why they were now open to attack.†

It was the growth of McCarthyism which brought most sharply into question the role of the intellectuals. Here, presumably, all men of good will could agree; here the interests of the intellectuals were beyond dispute and directly at stake. The record is not glorious. In New York circles it was often said that Bertrand Russell exaggerated wildly in describing the U.S. as "subject to a reign of terror" and that Simone de Beauvoir retained Stalinist clichés in her reportage from America. Yet it should not be forgotten that, if not "a reign of terror," McCarthyism was frightful and disgusting, and that a number of Communists and fellow-travelers, not always carefully specified, suffered serious harm.

A magazine like *Partisan Review* was of course opposed to McCarthy's campaign, but it failed to take the lead on the issue of freedom which might once again have imbued the intellectuals with fighting spirit. Unlike some of its New York counterparts, it did print sharp attacks on the drift toward conservatism, and it did not try to minimize the badness of the situation in the name of anti-Communism. But the magazine failed to speak out with enough force and persistence, or to break past the hedgings of those intellectuals who led the American Committee for Cultural Freedom.

COMMENTARY, under Elliot Cohen's editorship, was still more inclined to minimize the threat of McCarthyism. In September 1952, at the very moment McCarthy became a central issue in the Presidential campaign, Cohen could write: "McCarthy remains in the popular mind an unreliable, second-string blowhard; his only support as a great national figure is from the fascinated fears of the intelligentsia"—a mode of argument all too close to that of the anti-anti-Communists who kept repeating that Communism was a serious problem only in the minds of anti-Communists.

In the American Committee for Cultural Freedom the increasingly conformist and conservative impulses of the New York intellectuals, or at least of a good number of them, found formal expression. I quote at length from Michael Harrington in a 1955 *Dissent*, first because it says precisely what needs to be said and second because it has the value of contemporary evidence:

> In practice the ACCF has fallen behind Sidney Hook's views on civil liberties. Without implying any "conspiracy" theory of history . . . one may safely say that it is Hook who has molded the decisive ACCF policies. His *Heresy Yes, Conspiracy No* articles were widely circulated by the Committee, which meant that in effect it endorsed his systematic, explicit efforts to minimize the threat to civil liberties and to attack those European intellectuals who, whatever their own political or intellectual deficiencies, took a dim view of American developments. Under the guidance of Hook and the leadership of Irving Kristol, who supported Hook's general outlook, the American Committee cast its weight not so much in defense of these civil liberties which were steadily being nibbled away, but rather against those few remaining fellow-travelers who tried to exploit the civil-liberties issue.
>
> At times this had an almost comic aspect. When Irving Kristol was executive secretary of the ACCF, one learned to expect from him silence on those issues that were agitating the whole intellectual and academic world, and enraged communiqués on the outrages performed by people like Arthur Miller and Bertrand Russell in exaggerating the dangers to civil liberties in the U.S.
>
> Inevitably this led to more serious problems. In an article by Kristol, which first appeared in COMMENTARY and was later circulated under the ACCF imprimatur, one could read such astonishing and appalling statements as "there is one thing the American people know about Senator McCarthy; he, like them, is unequivocally anti-Communist. About the spokesmen for American liberalism, they feel they know no such thing. And with some justification." This in the name of defending cultural freedom!

Harrington then proceeded to list several instances in which the ACCF had "acted within the United States in defense of freedom." But

> these activities do not absorb the main attention or interest of the Committee; its leadership is too jaded, too imbued with the sourness of indiscriminate anti-Stalinism to give itself to an active struggle against the dominant trend of contemporary intellectual life in America. What it *really* cares about is a struggle against fellow-travelers and "neutralists"—that is, against many European intellectuals. . . .
>
> One of the crippling assumptions of the Committee has been that it would not intervene in cases where Stalinists or accused Stalinists were involved. It has rested this position on the academic argument . . . that Stalinists, being enemies of democracy, have no "right" to demo-

* Fifteen years later, again swept along by the *Zeitgeist*, Miss McCarthy would write that the Communist societies, because of their concentration of ownership, made economic planning more feasible than did capitalist societies. She is perhaps the last intellectual in the world who seems not to have heard about the disasters of "planning" in totalitarian society (e.g., recent reports from Czechoslovakia).

† One such attack was an essay by myself, "This Age of Conformity," *Partisan Review*, 1954. Looking at it again I believe that, apart from some gratuitous polemical sentences, its main thrust still holds. No close, let alone sympathetic, analysis can be found in this essay as to why intellectuals now felt themselves so much more at home in capitalist society than they had in the 30's or why they felt themselves driven to an intransigent anti-Communism. I wrote as a polemicist, not as a historian or a sociologist of knowledge; and if that limited the scope it did not, I think, blunt the point of my attack.

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cratic privileges. . . . But the actual problem is not the metaphysical one of whether enemies of democracy (as the Stalinists clearly are) have a "right" to democratic privileges. What matters is that the drive against cultural freedom and civil liberties takes on the guise of anti-Stalinism.

Years later came the revelations that the Congress for Cultural Freedom, which had its headquarters in Paris and with which the American Committee was for a time affiliated, had received secret funds from the CIA. Some of the people, it turned out, with whom one had sincerely disagreed were not free men at all; they were knowing accomplices of an intelligence service. What a sad denouement! And yet not the heart of the matter, as the malicious *Ramparts* journalists have tried to make out. Most of the intellectuals who belonged to the ACCF seem not to have had any knowledge of the CIA connection—on this, as on anything else, I would completely accept the word of Dwight Macdonald. It is also true, however, that these intellectuals seem not to have inquired very closely into the Congress's sources of support. That a few, deceiving their closest associates, established connections with the CIA was not nearly so important, however, as that a majority within the Committee acquiesced to a politics of acquiescence. We Americans have a strong taste for conspiracy theories, supposing that if you scratch a trouble you'll find a villain. But history is far more complicated, and squalid as the CIA tie was, it should not be used to smear honest people who had nothing to do with secret services even as they remain open to criticism for what they did say and do.

At the same time, the retrospective defenses offered by some New York intellectuals strike me as decidedly lame. Meetings and magazines sponsored by the Congress, Daniel Bell has said, kept their intellectual freedom and contained criticism of U.S. policy—true but hardly to the point, since the issue at stake is not the opinions the Congress tolerated but the larger problem of good faith in intellectual life. The leadership of the Congress did not give its own supporters the opportunity to choose whether they wished to belong to a CIA-financed group. Another defense, this one offered by Sidney Hook, is that private backing was hard to find during the years it was essential to publish journals like *Preuves* and *Encounter* in Europe. Simply as a matter of fact, I do not believe this. For the Congress to have raised its funds openly, from non-governmental sources, would have meant discomfort, scrounging, penny-pinching: all the irksome things edi tors of little magazines have always had to do. By the postwar years, however, leading figures of both the Congress and the Committee no longer thought or behaved in that tradition.

Dwight Macdonald did. His magazine *Politics* was the one significant effort during the late 40's to return to radicalism. Enlivened by Macdonald's ingratiating personality and his table-hopping mind, *Politics* brought together sophisticated muckraking with torturous revaluations of Marxist ideology. Macdonald could not long keep in balance the competing interests which finally tore apart his magazine: lively commentary on current affairs and unavoidable if depressing retrospects on the failure of the Left. As always with Macdonald, honesty won out (one almost adds, alas) and the "inside" political discussion reached its climax with his essay *The Root Is Man,* in which he arrived at a kind of anarcho-pacifism based on an absolutist morality. This essay was in many ways the most poignant and authentic expression of the plight of those few intellectuals—Nicola Chiaramonte, Paul Goodman, Macdonald—who wished to dissociate themselves from the postwar turn to *Realpolitik* but could not find ways of transforming sentiments of rectitude and visions of utopia into a workable politics. It was also a perfect leftist rationale for a kind of internal emigration of spirit and mind, with some odd shadings of similarity to the Salinger cult of the late 50's.*

The overwhelming intellectual drift, however, was toward the Right. Arthur Schlesinger Jr., with moony glances at Kierkegaard, wrote essays in which he maintained that American society had all but taken care of its economic problems and could now concentrate on raising its cultural level. The "end of ideology" became a favorite shield for intellectuals in retreat, though it was never entirely clear whether this phrase meant the end of "our" ideology (partly true) or that all ideologies were soon to disintegrate (not true) or that the time had come to abandon the nostalgia for ideology (at least debatable). And in the mid 50's, as if to codify things, there appeared in *Partisan Review* a symposium, "Our Country and Our Culture," in which all but three or four of the thirty participants clearly moved away from their earlier radical views. The rapprochement with "America the Beautiful," as Mary McCarthy now called it in a tone not wholly ironic, seemed almost complete.

IN THESE YEARS there also began that series of gyrations in opinion, interest, and outlook—so frenetic, so unserious—which would mark our intellectual life. In place of the

* It is not clear whether Macdonald still adheres to *The Root Is Man.* In a recent BBC broadcast he said about the student uprising at Columbia: "I don't approve of their methods, but Columbia will be a better place afterwards." Perhaps it will, perhaps it won't; but I don't see how the author of *The Root Is Man* could say this, since the one thing he kept insisting was that means could not be separated from ends, as the Marxists too readily separated them. He would surely have felt that if the means used by the students were objectionable, then their ends would be contaminated as well—and thereby the consequences of their action. But in the swinging 60's not many people trouble to remember their own lessons.

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avant-garde idea we now had the *style of fashion*, though to suggest a mere replacement may be too simple, since as Poggioli remarks, fashion has often shadowed the avant garde as a kind of dandified double. Some intellectuals turned to a weekend of religion, some to a semester of existentialism,* some to a holiday of Jewishness without faith or knowledge, some to a season of genteel conservatism. Leslie Fiedler, no doubt by design, seemed to go through more of such episodes than anyone else: even his admirers could not always be certain whether he was *davenning* or doing a rain dance.

These twists and turns were lively, and they could all seem harmless if only one could learn to look upon intellectual life as a variety of play, like *potsie* or *king of the hill*. What struck one as troubling, however, was not this or that fashion (tomorrow morning would bring another), but the dynamic of fashion itself, the ruthlessness with which, to remain in fashion, fashion had to keep devouring itself.

It would be unfair to give the impression that the fifteen years after the war were without significant growth or achievement among the New York writers. The attempt of recent New Left ideologues to present the 40's and 50's as if they were no more than a time of intellectual sterility and reaction is an oversimplification. Together with the turn toward conservative acquiescence, there were serious and valuable achievements. Hannah Arendt's book on totalitarianism may now seem open to many criticisms, but it certainly must rank as a major piece of work which, at the very least, made impossible—I mean, implausible—those theories of totalitarianism which, before and after she wrote, tended to reduce fascism and Stalinism to a matter of class rule or economic interest. Daniel Bell's writing contributed to the rightward turn of these years, but some of it, such as his excellent little book *Work and Its Discontents*, constitutes a permanent contribution, and one that is valuable for radicals too. The stress upon complexity of thought which characterized intellectual life during these years could be used as a rationale for conservatism, and perhaps even arose from the turn toward conservatism; but in truth, the lapsed radicalism of earlier years *had* proved to be simplistic, the world of late capitalism *was* perplexing, and for serious people complexity *is* a positive value. Even the few intellectuals who resisted the dominant temper of the 50's underwent during these years significant changes in their political outlooks and styles of thought: e.g., those around *Dissent* who cut whatever ties of sentiment still held them to the Bolshevik tradition and made the indissoluble connection between democracy and socialism a crux of their thought. Much that happened during these years is to be deplored and dismissed, but not all was waste; the increasing sophistication and complication of mind was a genuine gain, and it would be absurd, at this late date, to forgo it.

In literary criticism there were equivalent achievements. The very instability that might make a shambles out of political thought could have the effect of magnifying the powers required for criticism. Floundering in life and uncertainty in thought could make for an increased responsiveness to art. In the criticism of men like Trilling, Rahv, Chase, and Dupee there was now a more authoritative relation to the literary text and a richer awareness of the cultural past than was likely to be found in their earlier work. And a useful tension was also set up between the New York critics, whose instinctive response to literature was through a social-moral contextualism, and the New Critics, whose formalism may have been too rigid yet proved of great value to those who opposed it.

MEANWHILE, THE WORLD seemed to be opening up, with all its charms, seductions, and falsities. In the 30's the life of the New York writers had been confined: the little magazine as island, the radical sect as cave. Partly they were recapitulating the pattern of immigrant Jewish experience: an ingathering of the flock in order to break out into the world and taste the Gentile fruits of status and success. Once it became clear that waiting for the revolution might turn out to be steady work and that the United States would neither veer to fascism nor sink into depression, the intellectuals had little choice but to live within (which didn't necessarily mean, become partisans of) the existing society.

There was money to be had from publishers, no great amounts but more than in the past. There were jobs in the universities, even for those without degrees. Some writers began to discover that publishing a story in *The New Yorker* or *Esquire* was not a sure ticket to Satan; others to see that the academy, while perhaps less exciting than the Village, wasn't invariably a graveyard for intellect and might even provide the only harbor in which serious people could do their own writing and perform honorable work. This dispersion involved losses, but usually there was nothing sinister about it—unless one clung, past an appropriate age, to the fantasy of being a momentarily unemployed "professional revolutionist." Writers ought to know something about the world; they ought to test their notions against the reality of the country in which they live. Worldly involvements would, of course, bring risks, and one of these was power, really a very trifling kind of power, but still enough to raise the fear of corruption. That power corrupts

* The most lasting contribution this school of thought seems to have made to America is an adjective, as in "existential crisis," which communicates the sensation of depth without the burden of content.

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everyone knows by now, but we ought also to recognize that powerlessness, if not corrupting, can be damaging—as in the case of Paul Goodman, a very courageous writer who stuck to his anarchist beliefs through years in which he was mocked and all but excluded from the New York journals, yet who could also come to seem, in his very rectitude, an example of asphyxiating righteousness.

What brought about these changes? Partly ideological adaptation, a feeling that capitalist society was here to stay and there wasn't much point in maintaining a radical position or posture. Partly the sly workings of prosperity. But also a loosening of the society itself, the start of that process which only now is in full swing—I mean the remarkable absorptiveness of modern society, its readiness to abandon traditional precepts for a moment of excitement, its growing permissiveness toward social criticism, perhaps out of indifference, or security, or even tolerance.

In the 60's well-placed young professors and radical students would denounce the "success," sometimes the "sellout" of the New York writers. Their attitude reminds one a little of George Orwell's remark about wartime France: only a Pétain could afford the luxury of asceticism, ordinary people had to live by the necessities of materialism. But really, when you come to think of it, what did this "success" of the intellectuals amount to? A decent or a good job, a chance to earn extra money by working hard, and in the case of a few, like Trilling and Kazin, some fame beyond New York—rewards most European intellectuals would take for granted, so paltry would they seem. For the New York writers who lived through the 30's expecting never to have a job at all, a regular pay check might be remarkable; but in the American scale of things it was very modest indeed. And what the "leftist" prigs of the 60's, sons of psychiatrists and manufacturers, failed to understand—or perhaps understood only too well—was that the "success" with which they kept scaring themselves was simply one of the possibilities of adult life, a possibility, like failure, heavy with moral risks and disappointment. Could they imagine that they too might have to face the common lot?—I mean the whole business: debts, overwork, varicose veins, alimony, drinking, quarrels, hemorrhoids, depletion, the recognition that one might not prove to be another T.S. Eliot, but also some good things, some lessons learned, some "rags of time" salvaged and precious.

Here and there you could find petty greed or huckstering, now and again a drop into opportunism; but to make much of this would be foolish. Common clay, the New York writers had their share of common ambition. What drove them, and sometimes drove them crazy, was not, however, the quest for money, nor even a chance to "mix" with White House residents; it was finally, when all the trivia of existence was brushed aside, a gnawing ambition to write something, even three pages, that might live.

The intellectuals should have regarded their entry into the outer world as utterly commonplace, at least if they kept faith with the warning of Stendhal and Balzac that one must always hold a portion of the self forever beyond the world's reach. Few of the New York intellectuals made much money on books and articles. Few reached audiences beyond the little magazines. Few approached any centers of power, and precisely the buzz of gossip attending the one or two sometimes invited to a party beyond the well-surveyed limits of the West Side showed how confined their life still was. What seems most remarkable in retrospect is the innocence behind the assumption, sometimes held by the New York writers themselves with a nervous mixture of guilt and glee, that whatever recognition they won was cause for either preening or embarrassment. For all their gloss of sophistication, they had not really moved very far into the world. The immigrant milk was still on their lips.

IN THEIR published work during these years, the New York intellectuals developed a characteristic style of exposition and polemic. With some admiration and a bit of irony, let us call it the style of brilliance. The kind of essay they wrote was likely to be wide-ranging in reference, melding notions about literature and politics, sometimes announcing itself as a study of a writer or literary group but usually taut with a pressure to "go beyond" its subject, toward some encompassing moral or social observation. It is a kind of writing highly self-conscious in mode, with an unashamed vibration of bravura and display. Nervous, strewn with knotty or flashy phrases, impatient with transitions and other concessions to dullness, willfully calling attention to itself as a form or at least an outcry, fond of rapid twists, taking pleasure in dispute, dialectic, dazzle—such, at its best or most noticeable, was the essay cultivated by the New York writers. Until recently its strategy of exposition was likely to be impersonal (the writer did not speak much as an "I") but its tone and bearing were likely to be intensely personal (the audience was to be made aware that the aim of the piece was not judiciousness but rather a strong impress of attitude, a blow of novelty, a wrenching of accepted opinion, sometimes a mere indulgence of vanity).

In most of these essays there was a sense of *tournament*, the writer as gymnast with one eye on other rings, or as skilled infighter juggling knives of dialectic. Polemics were harsh, often rude. And audiences nurtured, or spoiled, on this kind of performance, learned not to form settled judgments about a dispute until all sides had registered their blows: surprise was always a possible reward.

This style may have brought new life to the American essay, but in contemporary audiences

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it often evoked a strong distaste and even fear. "Ordinary" readers could be left with the fretful sense that they were not "in," the beauties of polemic racing past their sluggish eye. Old-line academics, quite as if they had just crawled out of *The Dunciad*, enjoyed dismissing the New York critics as "unsound." And for some younger souls, the cliffs of dialectic seemed too steep. Seymour Krim has left a poignant account of his disablement before "the overcerebral, Europeanish, sterilely citified, pretentiously alienated" New York intellectuals. Resentful at the fate which drove them to compare themselves with "the overcerebral etc. etc.," Krim writes that he and his friends "were often tortured and unappeasably bitter about being the offspring of this unhappily unique-ingrown-screwed-up breed." Similar complaints could be heard from other writers and would-be writers who felt that New York intellectualism threatened their vital powers.

At its best the style of brilliance reflected a certain view of the intellectual life: free-lance dash, peacock strut, daring hypothesis, knockabout synthesis. For better or worse it was radically different from the accepted modes of scholarly publishing and middle-brow journalism. It celebrated the idea of the intellectual as anti-specialist, or as a writer whose speciality was the lack of a speciality: the writer as dilettante-connoisseur, *Luftmensch* of the mind, roamer among theories. But it was a style which also lent itself with peculiar ease to a stifling mimicry and decadence. Sometimes it seemed—no doubt mistakenly—as if any sophomore, indeed any parrot, could learn to write one of those scintillating *Partisan* reviews, so thoroughly could manner consume matter. In the 50's the cult of brilliance became a sign that writers were offering not their work or ideas but themselves, the *persona* as content; and this was but a step or two away from the exhibitionism of the 60's. Brilliance could become a sign of intellect unmoored: the less assurance, the more pyrotechnics. In making this judgment I ought to be frank enough to register the view that serious writers may prove to be brilliant and take pleasure in the proving, but insofar as they are serious, their overriding aim must be absolute lucidity.

If to the minor genre of the essay the New York writers made a major contribution, to the major genres of fiction and poetry they made only a minor contribution. As a literary group and no more than a literary group, they will seem less important than, say, the New Critics, who did set in motion a whole school of poetry. A few poets—Berryman, Lowell, Jarrell, perhaps Kunitz—have been influenced by the New York intellectuals, though in ways hard to specify and hardly comprising a major pressure on their work: all were finished writers by the time they brushed against the New York milieu. For one or two poets, the influence of New York meant becoming aware of the cultural pathos resident in the idea of the Jew (not always distinguished from the idea of Delmore Schwartz). But the main literary contribution of the New York milieu has been to legitimate a subject and tone we must uneasily call American Jewish writing. The fiction of urban malaise, second-generation complaint, Talmudic dazzle, woeful alienation, and dialectical irony, all found its earliest expression in the pages of Commentary and *Partisan Review*—fiction in which the Jewish world is not merely regained in memory as a point of beginnings, an archetypal Lower East Side of spirit and place, but is also treated as a portentous metaphor of man's homelessness and wandering.

Such distinguished short fictions as Bellow's "Seize the Day," Schwartz's "In Dreams Begin Responsibility," Mailer's "The Man Who Studied Yoga," and Malamud's "The Magic Barrel" seem likely to survive the cultural moment in which they were written. And even if one concludes that these and similar pieces are not enough to warrant speaking of a major literary group, they certainly form a notable addition—a new tone, a new sensibility—to American writing. In time, these writers may be regarded as the last "regional" group in American literature, parallel to recent Southern writers in both sophistication of craft and a thematic dissociation from the values of American society. Nor is it important that during the last few decades both of these literary tendencies, the Southern and the Jewish, have been overvalued. The distance of but a few years has already made it clear that except for Faulkner Southern writing consists of a scatter of talented minor poets and novelists; and in a decade or so a similar judgment may be commonly accepted about most of the Jewish writers—though in regard to Bellow and Mailer settled opinions are still risky.

What is clear from both Southern and Jewish writing is that in a society increasingly disturbed about its lack of self-definition, the recall of regional and traditional details can be intensely absorbing in its own right, as well as suggestive of larger themes transcending the region. (For the Jewish writers New York was not merely a place, it was a symbol, a burden, a stamp of history.) Yet the writers of neither school have thus far managed to move from their particular milieu to a grasp of the entire culture; the very strengths of their localism define their limitations; and especially is this true for the Jewish writers, in whose behalf critics have recently overreached themselves. The effort to transform a Jewishness without religious or ethnic content into an emblem of universal dismay can easily lapse into sentimentality.

Whatever the hopeful future of individual writers, the "school" of American Jewish writing is by now in an advanced state of decomposition: how else explain the attention it has lately en-

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joyed? Or the appearance of a generation of younger Jewish writers who, without authentic experience or memory to draw upon, manufacture fantasies about the lives of their grandfathers? Or the popularity of Isaac Bashevis Singer who, coming to the American literary scene precisely at the moment when writers composing in English had begun to exhaust the Jewish subject, could, by dazzling contrast, extend it endlessly backward in time and deeper in historical imagination?

Just as there appear today young Jewish intellectuals who no longer know what it is that as Jews they do not know, so in fiction the fading immigrant world offers a thinner and thinner yield to writers of fiction. It no longer presses on memory, people can now *choose* whether to care about it. We are almost at the end of a historic experience, and it now seems unlikely that there will have arisen in New York a literary school comparable to the best this country has had. Insofar as the New York intellectual atmosphere has affected writers like Schwartz, Rosenfeld, Bellow, Malamud, Mailer, Goodman, and Roth (some of these would hotly deny that it has), it seems to have been too brittle, too contentious, too insecure for major creative work. What cannot yet be estimated is the extent to which the styles and values of the New York world may have left a mark on the work of American writers who never came directly under its influence or have been staunchly hostile to all of its ways.

Thinking back upon intellectual life in the 40's and 50's, and especially the air of malaise that hung over it, I find myself turning to a theme as difficult to clarify as it is impossible to evade. And here, for a few paragraphs, let me drop the porous shield of impersonality and speak openly in the first person.

WE WERE LIVING directly after the Holocaust of the European Jews. We might scorn our origins; we might crush America with discoveries of ardor; we might change our names. But we knew that but for an accident of geography we might also now be bars of soap. At least some of us could not help feeling that in our earlier claims to have shaken off all ethnic distinctiveness there had been something false, something shaming. Our Jewishness might have no clear religious or national content, it might be helpless before the criticism of believers; but Jews we were, like it or not, and liked or not.

To recognize that we were living after one of the greatest and least explicable catastrophes of human history, and one for which we could not claim to have adequately prepared ourselves either as intellectuals or as human beings, brought a new rush of feelings, mostly unarticulated and hidden behind the scrim of consciousness. It brought a low-charged but nagging guilt, a quiet remorse. Sartre's brilliant essay on authentic and inauthentic Jews left a strong mark. Hannah Arendt's book on totalitarianism had an equally strong impact, mostly because it offered a coherent theory, or at least a coherent picture, of the concentration camp universe. We could no longer escape the conviction that, blessing or curse, Jewishness was an integral part of our life, even if—and perhaps just because—there was nothing we could do or say about it. Despite a few simulated seders and literary raids on Hasidism, we could not turn back to the synagogue; we could only express our irritation with "the community" which kept nagging us like disappointed mothers; and sometimes we tried, through imagination and recall, to put together a few bits and pieces of the world of our fathers. I cannot prove a connection between the Holocaust and the turn to Jewish themes in American fiction, at first urgent and quizzical, later fashionable and manipulative. I cannot prove that my own turn to Yiddish literature during the 50's was due to the shock following the war years. But it would be foolish to scant the possibility.

The violent dispute which broke out among the New York intellectuals when Hannah Arendt published her book on Eichmann had as one of its causes a sense of guilt concerning the Jewish tragedy—a guilt pervasive, unmanageable, yet seldom declared at the surface of speech or act. In the quarrel between those attacking and those defending *Eichmann in Jerusalem* there were polemical excesses on both sides, insofar as both were acting out of unacknowledged passions. Yet even in the debris of this quarrel there was, I think, something good. At least everyone was acknowledging emotions that had long gone unused. Nowhere else in American academic and intellectual life was there such ferocity of concern with the problems raised by Hannah Arendt. If left to the rest of the American intellectual world, her book would have been praised as "stimulating" and "thoughtful," and then everyone would have gone back to sleep. Nowhere else in the country could there have been the kind of public forum sponsored on this subject by *Dissent*: a debate sometimes ugly and outrageous, yet also urgent and afire—evidence that in behalf of ideas we were still ready to risk personal relationships. After all, it had never been dignity that we could claim as our strong point.

IV

NOTHING ABOUT the New York writers is more remarkable than the sheer fact of their survival. In a country where tastes in culture change more rapidly than lengths of skirts, they have succeeded in maintaining a degree of influence, as well as a distinctive milieu, for more than thirty years. Apart from reasons intrinsic to the intellectual life, let me note a few that are somewhat more worldly in nature.

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• There is something, perhaps a quasi-religious dynamism, about an ideology, even a lapsed ideology that everyone says has reached its end, which yields force and coherence to those who have closely experienced it. A lapsed Catholic has tactical advantages in his apostasy which a lifelong skeptic does not have. And just as Christianity kept many 19th-century writers going long after they had discarded religion, so Marxism gave bite and edge to the work of 20th-century writers long after they had turned from socialism.

• The years in which the New York writers gained some prominence were those in which the style at which they had arrived—irony, ambiguity, complexity, the problematic as mode of knowledge—took on a magnified appeal for the American educated classes. After the Second World War the cultivation of private sensibility and personal responsibility were values enormously popular among reflective people, to whom the very thought of public life smacked of betrayal and vulgarity.

• An intelligentsia flourishes in a capital: Paris, St. Petersburg, Berlin. The influence of the New York writers grew at the time New York itself, for better or worse, became the cultural center of the country. And thereby, to return to Poggioli's categories, the New York writers slowly shed the characteristics of an intelligentsia and transformed themselves into—

An Establishment?

Perhaps. But what precisely *is* an Establishment? Vaguely sinister in its overtones, the term is used these days with gay abandon on the American campus; but except as a spread-eagle put-down it has no discernible meaning, and if accepted as a put-down, the problem then becomes to discover who, if anyone, is not in the Establishment. In England the term has had a certain clarity of usage, referring to an intellectual elite which derives from the same upper and middle classes as the men who wield political power and which shares with these men Oxbridge education and Bloomsbury culture. But except in F. R. Leavis's angrier tirades, "Establishment" does not bear the conspiratorial overtones we are inclined to credit in this country. What it does in England is to locate the social-cultural stratum guiding the tastes of the classes in power and thereby crucially affecting the tastes of the country as a whole.

In this sense, neither the New York writers nor any other group can be said to comprise an American Establishment, simply because no one in this country has ever commanded an equivalent amount of cultural power. The New York writers have few, if any, connections with a stable class of upper-rank civil servants or with a significant segment of the rich. They are notably without connections in Washington. They do not shape official or dominant tastes. And they cannot exert the kind of control over cultural opinion that the London Establishment is said to have maintained until recently. Critics like Trilling and Kazin are listened to by people in publishing, Rosenberg and Greenberg by people in the art world; but this hardly constitutes anything so formidable as an Establishment. Indeed, at the very time mutterings have been heard about a New York literary Establishment, there has occurred a rapid disintegration of whatever group ties may still have remained among the New York writers. They lack—and it is just as well—the first requirement for an Establishment: that firm sense of internal discipline which enables it to impose its values and tastes on a large public.

During the last few years the talk about a New York Establishment has taken an extremely unpleasant turn. Whoever does a bit of lecturing about the country is likely to encounter, after a few drinks, literary academics who inquire enviously, sometimes spitefully, about "what's new in New York." Such people seem to feel that exile in outlying regions means they are missing something remarkable (and so they are: the Balanchine company). The cause of their cultural envy is, I think, a notion that has become prevalent in our English departments that scholarship is somehow unworthy and the "real" literary life is to be found in the periodical journalism of New York. Intrinsically this is a dubious notion and for the future of American education, a disastrous one; when directed against the New York writers it leads to some painful situations. As polite needling questions are asked about the cultural life of New York, a rise of sweat comes to one's brow, for everyone knows what no one says: New York means Jews.*

Whatever the duration or extent of the influence enjoyed by the New York intellectuals, it is now reaching an end. There are signs of internal disarray: unhealed wounds, a dispersal of interests, the damage of time. More important, however, is the appearance these last few years of a new and powerful challenge to the New York writers. And here I shall have to go off on what may appear to be a long digression, since one cannot understand the present situation of the New York writers without taking into detailed account the cultural-political scene of America in the 60's.

THERE IS A rising younger generation of intellectuals: ambitious, self-assured, at ease with prosperity while conspicuously alienated, unmarred by the traumas of the totalitarian age, bored with memories of defeat, and attracted to the idea of power. This generation matters, thus far, not so much for its leading fig-

* Not quite no one. In an attack on the New York writers (*Hudson Review*, Autumn 1965) Richard Kostelanetz speaks about "Jewish group-aggrandizement" and "the Jewish American push." One appreciates the delicacy of his phrasing.

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ures and their meager accomplishments, but for the political-cultural style—what I shall call the new sensibility—it thrusts into absolute opposition both to the New York writers and to other groups. It claims not to seek penetration into, or accommodation with, our cultural and academic institutions; it fancies the prospect of a harsh generational fight; and given the premise with which it begins—that everything touched by older men reeks of betrayal—its claims and fancies have a sort of propriety. It proposes a revolution, I would call it a counterrevolution, in sensibility. Though linked to New Left politics, it goes beyond any politics, making itself felt, like a spreading blot of anti-intellectualism, in every area of intellectual life. Not yet fully cohered, this new cultural group cannot yet be fully defined, nor is it possible fully to describe its projected sensibility, since it declares itself through a refusal of both coherence and definition.

There is no need to discuss once more the strengths and weaknesses of the New Left, its moral energies and intellectual muddles. Nor need we be concerned with the tactical issues separating New Left politics from that of older left-wing intellectuals. Were nothing else at stake than, say, "coalition politics," the differences would be both temporary and tolerable. But in reality a deeper divergence of outlook has begun to show itself. The new intellectual style, insofar as it approximates a politics, mixes sentiments of anarchism with apologies for authoritarianism; bubbling hopes for "participatory democracy" with manipulative elitism; unqualified populist majoritarianism with the reign of the cadres.

A confrontation of intellectual outlooks is unavoidable. And a central issue is certain to be the problem of liberalism, not liberalism as one or another version of current politics, nor even as a theory of power, but liberalism as a cast of mind, a structure of norms by means of which to humanize public life. For those of us who have lived through the age of totalitarianism and experienced the debacle of socialism, this conflict over liberal values is extremely painful. We have paid heavily for the lesson that democracy, even "bourgeois democracy," is a precious human achievement, one that, far from being simply a mode of mass manipulation, has been wrested through decades of struggle by the labor, socialist, and liberal movements. To protect the values of liberal democracy, often against those who call themselves liberals, is an elementary task for the intellectuals as a social group.

Yet what I have just been saying, axiomatic as it may seem, has in the last few years aroused opposition, skepticism, open contempt among professors, students, and intellectuals. On the very crudest, though by no means unpopular, level, we find a vulgarization of an already vulgar Marxism. The notion that we live in a society that can be described as "liberal fascism" (a theoretic contribution from certain SDS leaders) isn't one that serious people can take seriously; but the fact that it is circulated in the academic community signifies a counterrevolution of the mind: a refusal of nuance and observation, a willed return to the kind of political primitivism which used to declare the distinctions of bourgeois rule—democratic, authoritarian, totalitarian—as slight in importance.

For the talk about "liberal fascism" men like Norman Mailer must bear a heavy responsibility, insofar as they have recklessly employed the term "totalitarian" as a descriptive for present-day American society. Having lived through the ghastliness of the Stalinist theory of "social fascism" (the grand-daddy of "liberal fascism") I cannot suppose any literate person really accepts this kind of nonsense, yet I know that people can find it politically expedient to pretend that they do. It is, in Ernest Nolte's phrase, "a lie which the intellect sees for what it is but which is [felt to be] at one with the deeper motivations of life."

THERE ARE sophisticated equivalents. One of these points to the failings and crises of democracy, concluding that the content of decision has been increasingly separated from the forms of decision-making. Another emphasizes the manipulation of the masses by communication media and declares them brainwashed victims incapable of rational choice and acquiescing in their own subjugation. A third decries the bureaucratic entanglements of the political process and favors some version, usually more sentiment than scheme, for direct plebiscitory rule. With varying intelligence, all point to acknowledged problems of democratic society; and there could be no urgent objection were these criticisms not linked with the premise that the troubles of democracy can be overcome by undercutting or bypassing representative institutions. Thus, it is quite true that the masses are manipulated, but to make that the crux of a political analysis is to lead into the notion that elections are mere "formalities" and majorities mere tokens of the inauthentic; what is needed, instead, is Marcuse's "educational dictatorship" (in which, I hope, at least some of the New York intellectuals would require the most prolonged reeducation). And in a similar vein, all proposals for obligatory or pressured "participation," apart from violating the democratic right not to participate, have a way of discounting those representative institutions and limitations upon power which can alone provide a degree of safeguard for liberal norms.

Perhaps the most sophisticated and currently popular of anti-democratic notions is that advanced by Herbert Marcuse: his contempt for tolerance on the ground that it is a veil for subjection, a rationale for maintaining the status quo, and his consequent readiness to suppress "regres-

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sive" elements of the population lest they impede social "liberation." About these theories, which succeed in salvaging the worst of Leninism, Henry David Aiken has neatly remarked: "Whether garden-variety liberties can survive the ministrations of such 'liberating tolerance' is not a question that greatly interests Marcuse." Indeed not.

Such theories are no mere academic indulgence or sectarian irrelevance; they have been put to significant use on the American campus as rationalizations for schemes to break up meetings of political opponents and as the justification for imaginary *coups d'état* by tiny minorities of enraged intellectuals. How depressing that "men of the Left," themselves so often victims of repression, should attack the values of tolerance and freedom.*

THESE DIFFERENCES concerning liberal norms run very deep and are certain to affect American intellectual life in the coming years; yet they do not quite get to the core of the matter. In the *Kulturkampf* now emerging there are issues more consequential than the political ones, issues that have to do with basic views concerning the nature of human life.

One of these has been with us for a long time, and trying now to put it into simple language, I feel a measure of uneasiness, as if it were bad form to violate the tradition of antinomianism in which we have all been raised.

What, for "emancipated" people, is the surviving role of moral imperatives, or at least moral recommendations? Do these retain for us a shred of sanctity or at least of coercive value? The question to which I am moving is not, of course, whether the moral life is desirable or men should try to live it; no, the question has to do with the provenance and defining conditions of the moral life. Do moral principles continue to signify insofar as and if they come into conflict with spontaneous impulses, and more urgently still, can we conceive of moral principles retaining some validity if they do come into conflict with spontaneous impulses? Are we still to give credit to the idea, one of the few meeting-points between traditional Christianity and modern Freudianism, that there occurs and must occur a deepseated clash between instinct and civilization, nature and nurture, or can we now, with a great sigh of collective relief, dismiss this as still another hangup, perhaps the supreme hangup, of Western civilization?

For more than 150 years there has been a line of Western thought, as also of sentiment in modern literature, which calls into question not one or another moral commandment or regulation, but the very idea of commandment and regulation; which insists that the ethic of control, like the ethic of work, should be regarded as spurious, a token of a centuries-long heritage of repression. Sometimes this view comes to us as a faint residue of Christian heresy, more recently as the blare of Nietzschean prophecy, and on our own day as a psychoanalytic gift.

Now, even those of us raised on the premise of revolt against received values, against the whole system of bourgeois constriction and anti-pleasure, did not—I suppose it had better be said outright—imagine ourselves to be exempt from the irksome necessity of regulation, even if we had managed to escape the reach of the commandments. Neither primitive Christians nor romantic naïfs, we did not suppose that we could entrust ourselves entirely to the beneficence of nature, or the signals of our bodies, as a sufficient guide to conduct. My very use of the word "conduct," freighted as it is with normative associations, puts the brand of time on what I am saying.

By contrast, the emerging new sensibility rests on a vision of innocence: an innocence through lapse or will or recovery, an innocence through a refusal of our and perhaps any other culture, an innocence not even to be preceded by the withering away of the state, since in this view of things the state could wither away only if men learned so to be at ease with their desires, all need for regulation would fade. This is a vision of life beyond good and evil, not because these experiences or possibilities of experience have been confronted and transcended, but because the categories by which we try to designate them have been dismissed. There is no need to taste the apple: the apple brings health to those who know how to bite it: and look more closely, there is no apple at all, it exists only in your sickened imagination.

The new sensibility posits a theory that might be called *the psychology of unobstructed need*: men should satisfy those needs which are theirs, organic to their bodies and psyches, and to do this they now must learn to discard or destroy all those obstructions, mostly the result of cultural neurosis, which keep them from satisfying their needs. This does not mean that the moral life is

*That Marcuse chooses not to apply his theories to the area of society in which he himself functions is a tribute to his personal realism, or perhaps merely a sign of a lack of intellectual seriousness. In a recent public discussion, recorded by the New York *Times Magazine* (May 26, 1968), there occurred the following exchange:

Hentoff: We've been talking about new institutions, new structures, as the only way to get fundamental change. What would that mean to you, Mr. Marcuse, in terms of the university, in terms of Columbia?

Marcuse: I was afraid of that because I now finally reveal myself as a fink. I have never suggested or advocated or supported destroying the established universities and building new anti-institutions instead. I have always said that no matter how radical the demands of the students and no matter how justified, they should be pressed within the existing universities. . . . I believe—and this is where the finkdom comes in—that American universities, at least quite a few of them, today are still enclaves of relatively critical thought and relatively free thought.

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denied; it only means that in the moral economy costs need not be entered as a significant item. In the current vocabulary, it becomes a matter of everyone doing "his own thing," and once all of us are allowed to do "his own thing," a prospect of easing harmony unfolds. Sexuality is the ground of being, and vital sexuality the assurance of the moral life.

Whether this outlook is compatible with a high order of culture or a complex civilization I shall not discuss here; Freud thought they were not compatible, though that does not foreclose the matter. More immediately, and on a less exalted plane, one is troubled by the following problem: what if the needs and impulses of human beings clash, as they seem to do, and what if the transfer of energies from sexuality to sociality does not proceed with the anticipated abundance and smoothness? The new sensibility, as displayed in the writings of Norman Brown and Norman Mailer, falls back upon a curious analogue to *laissez faire* economics, Adam Smith's invisible hand, by means of which innumerable units in conflict with one another achieve a resultant of cooperation. Is there, however, much reason to suppose that this will prove more satisfactory in the economy of moral conduct than it has in the morality of economic relations?

Suppose that, after reading Mailer's "The White Negro," my "thing" happens to be that, to "dare the unknown" (as Mailer puts it), I want to beat in the brains of an aging candystore keeper; or after reading LeRoi Jones, I should like to cut up a few Jews, whether or not they keep stores—how is anyone going to argue against the outpouring of my need? Who will declare himself its barrier? Against me, against my ideas it is possible to argue, but how, according to this new dispensation, can anyone argue against my *need*? Acting through violence I will at least have realized myself, for I will have entered (to quote Mailer) "a new relation with the police" and introduced "a dangerous element" into my life; thereby, too, I will have escaped the cell-block of regulation which keeps me from the free air of self-determination. And if you now object that this very escape may lead to brutality, you reveal yourself as hopelessly linked to imperfection and original sin. For why should anyone truly heeding his nature wish to kill or wound or do anything but love and make love? That certain spokesmen of the new sensibility seem to be boiling over with fantasies of blood, or at least suppose that a verbal indulgence in such fantasies is a therapy for the boredom in their souls, is a problem for dialecticians. And as for skeptics, what have they to offer but evidence from history, that European contamination?

When it is transposed to a cultural setting, this psychology—in earlier times it would have been called a moral psychology—provokes a series of disputes over "complexity" in literature. Certain older critics find much recent writing distasteful and tiresome because it fails to reach or grasp for that complexity which they regard as intrinsic to the human enterprise. More indulgent critics, not always younger, find the same kind of writing forceful, healthy, untangled. At first this seems like a problem in taste, a pardonable difference between those who like their poems and novels knotty and those who like them smooth; but soon it becomes clear that this clash arises from a meeting of incompatible world-outlooks. For if the psychology of unobstructed need is taken as a sufficient guide to life, it all but eliminates any need for complexity—or rather, the need for complexity comes to be seen as a mode of false consciousness, an evasion of true feelings, a psychic bureaucratism in which to trap the pure and the strong. If good sex signifies good feeling; good feeling, good being; good being, good action; and good action, a healthy polity, then we have come the long way round, past the Reichian way or the Lawrentian way, to an Emersonian romanticism minus Emerson's complicatedness of vision. The world snaps back into a system of burgeoning potentialities, waiting for free spirits to attach themselves to the richness of natural object and symbol—except that now the orgasmic blackout is to replace the Oversoul as the current through which pure transcendent energies will flow.

We are confronting, then, a new phase in our culture, which in motive and spring represents a wish to shake off the bleeding heritage of modernism and reinstate one of those periods of the collective naïf which seem endemic to American experience. The new sensibility is impatient with ideas. It is impatient with literary structures of complexity and coherence, only yesterday the catchwords of our criticism. It wants instead works of literature—though literature may be the wrong word—that will be as absolute as the sun, as unarguable as orgasm, and as delicious as a lollipop. It schemes to throw off the weight of nuance and ambiguity, legacies of high consciousness and tired blood. It is weary of the habit of reflection, the making of distinctions, the squareness of dialectic, the tarnished gold of inherited wisdom. It cares nothing for the haunted memories of old Jews. It has no taste for the ethical nail-biting of those writers of the Left who suffered defeat and could never again accept the narcotic of certainty. It is sick of those magnifications of irony that Mann gave us, sick of those visions of entrapment to which Kafka led us, sick of those shufflings of daily horror and grace that Joyce left us. It breathes contempt for rationality, impatience with mind, and a hostility to the artifices and decorums of high culture. It despises liberal values, liberal cautions, liberal virtues. It is bored with the past: for the past is a fink.

Where Marx and Freud were diggers of intel-

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lect, mining deeper and deeper into society and the psyche, and forever determined to strengthen the dominion of reason, today the favored direction of search is not inward but sideways, an "expansion of consciousness" through the kick of drugs. The new sensibility is drawn to images of sickness, but not, as with the modernist masters, out of dialectical canniness or religious blasphemy; it takes their denials literally and does not even know the complex desperations that led them to deny. It seeks to charge itself into dazzling sentience through chemicals and the rhetoric of violence. It gropes for sensations: the innocence of blue, the ejaculations of red. It *ordains* life's simplicity. It chooses surfaces as against relationships, the skim of texture rather than the weaving of pattern. Haunted by boredom, it transforms art into a sequence of shocks which, steadily magnified, yield fewer and fewer thrills, so that simply to maintain a modest *frisson* requires mounting exertions. It proposes an art as disposable as a paper dress, to which one need give nothing but a flicker of notice. Especially in the theater it resurrects tattered heresies, trying to collapse aesthetic distance in behalf of touch and frenzy. (But if illusion is now worn out, what remains but staging the realities of rape, fellatio, and murder?) Cutting itself off from a knowledge of what happened before the moment of its birth, it repeats with a delighted innocence most of what did in fact happen: expressionist drama reduced to skit, agit-prop tumbled to farce, Melvillean anguish slackened into black humor. It devalues the word, which is soaked up with too much past history, and favors monochromatic cartoons, companionate grunts, and glimpses of the ineffable in popular ditties. It has some humor, but not much wit. Of the tragic it knows next to nothing. Where Dostoevsky made nihilism seem sinister by painting it in jolly colors, the new American sensibility does something no other culture could have aspired to: it makes nihilism seem casual, good-natured, even innocent. No longer burdened by the idea of the problematic, it arms itself with the paraphernalia of post-industrial technique and crash-dives into a Typee of neo-primitivism.

Its high priests are Norman Brown, Herbert Marcuse, and Marshall McLuhan,* all writers with a deeply conservative bias: all committed to a stasis of the given: the stasis of unmoving instinct, the stasis of unmovable society, the stasis of endlessly moving technology. Classics of the latest thing, these three figures lend the new sensibility an aura of profundity. Their prestige can be employed to suggest an organic link between cultural modernism and the new sensibility, though in reality their relation to modernism is no more than biographical.

Perhaps because it is new, some of the new style has its charms—mainly along the margins of social life, in dress, music, and slang. In that it captures the yearnings of a younger generation, the new style has more than charm: a vibration of moral desire, a desire for goodness of heart. Still, we had better not deceive ourselves. Some of those shiny-cheeked darlings adorned with flowers and tokens of love can also be campus *enragés* screaming "Up Against the Wall, Motherfuckers, This Is a Stickup" (a slogan that does not strike one as a notable improvement over "Workers of the World, Unite").

THAT FINALLY there should appear an impulse to shake off the burdens and entanglements of modernism need come as no surprise. After all the virtuosos of torment and enigma we have known, it would be fine to have a period in Western culture devoted to relaxed pleasures and surface hedonism. But so far this does not seem possible: the century forbids it. What strikes one most forcefully about a great deal of the new writing and theater is its grindingly ideological tone, even if now the claim is for an ideology of pleasure. And what strikes one even more is the air of pulsing *ressentiment* which pervades this work, an often unearned and seemingly inexplicable hostility. If one went by the cues of a critic like Susan Sontag, one might suppose that the ethical torments of Kamanetz Podolsk and the moral repressiveness of Salem, Massachusetts had finally been put to rest, in favor of creamy delights in texture, color, and sensation. But nothing of the sort is true, at least not yet; it is only advertised.

Keen on tactics, the spokesmen for the new sensibility proclaim it to be still another turn in the endless gyrations of modernism, still another revolt in the permanent revolution of 20th-century sensibility. This approach is very shrewd, since it can disarm in advance those older New York (and other) critics who still respond with enthusiasm to the battlecries of modernism. But several objections or qualifications need to be registered:

• Modernism, by its very nature, is uncompromisingly a minority culture, creating and defining itself through opposition to a dominant culture. Today, however, nothing of the sort is true. Floodlights glaring and tills overflowing, the new sensibility is a success from the very start.

* John Simon has some cogent things to say about Brown and McLuhan, the pop poppas of the new: ". . . like McLuhan, Brown fulfills the four requirements for our prophets: (1) to span and reconcile, however grotesquely, various disciplines to the relief of a multitude of specialists; (2) to affirm something, even if it is something negative, retrogressive, mad; (3) to justify something vulgar or sick or indefensible in us, whether it be television-addiction (McLuhan) or schizophrenia (Brown); (4) to abolish the need for discrimination, difficult choices, balancing mind and appetite, and so reduce the complex orchestration of life to the easy strumming of a monochord. Brown and McLuhan have nicely apportioned the world between them: the inward madness for the one, the outward manias for the other."

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The middle-class public, eager for thrills and humiliations, welcomes it; so do the mass media, always on the alert for exploitable sensations; and naturally there appear intellectuals with handy theories. The new sensibility is both embodied and celebrated in the actions of Norman Mailer, whose condition as a swinger in America is not quite comparable with that of Joyce in Trieste or Kafka in Prague or Lawrence anywhere; it is reinforced with critical exegesis by Susan Sontag, a publicist able to make brilliant quilts from grandmother's patches; it is housed and braced by Robert Brustein, who has been writing drama reviews as if thumbing one's nose on the stage were a sufficient act of social criticism.* And on a far lower level, it has even found its Smerdyakov in LeRoi Jones, that parodist of apocalypse who rallies Jewish audiences with calls for Jewish blood. Whatever one may think of this situation, it is surely very different from the classical picture of a besieged modernism.

• By now the search for the "new," often reduced to a trivializing of form and matter, has become the predictable old. To suppose that we keep moving from cultural breakthrough to breakthrough requires a collective wish to forget what happened yesterday and even the day before: ignorance always being a great spur to claims for originality. Alienation has been transformed from a serious and revolutionary concept into a motif of mass culture, and the content of modernism into the decor of *kitsch*. As Harold Rosenberg has pungently remarked:

> The sentiment of the diminution of personality is an historical hypothesis upon which writers have constructed a set of literary conventions by this time richly equipped with theatrical machinery and symbolic allusions. . . . The individual's emptiness and inability to act have become an irrefrangible cliché, untiringly supported by an immense, voluntary phalanx of latecomers to modernism. In this manifestation, the notion of the void has lost its critical edge and is thoroughly reactionary.

• The effort to assimilate new cultural styles to the modernist tradition brushes aside problems of value, quality, judgment. It rests upon a philistine version of the theory of progress in the arts: all must keep changing, and change signifies a realization of progress. Yet even if an illicit filiation can be shown, there is a vast difference in seriousness and accomplishment between the modernism of some decades ago and what we have now. The great literary modernists (to cite but one instance) put at the center of their work a confrontation and struggle with the demons of nihilism; the literary swingers of the 60's, facing a nihilist violation, cheerfully remove the threat by what Fielding once called "a timely compliance." Just as in the verse of Swinburne echoes of Romanticism sag through the stanzas, so in much current writing there is indeed a continuity with modernism, but a continuity of grotesque and parody, through the doubles of fashion.

STILL, IT would be foolish to deny that in the *Kulturkampf* of the 60's, the New York intellectuals are at a severe disadvantage. Some have simply gone over to the other camp. A critic like Susan Sontag employs the dialectical skills and accumulated knowledge of intellectual life in order to bless the new sensibility as a dispensation of pleasure, beyond the grubby reach of interpretation and thereby, it would seem, beyond the tight voice of judgment. That her theories are skillfully-rebuilt versions of aesthetic notions long familiar and discarded; that in her own critical writing she interprets like mad and casts an image anything but hedonistic, relaxed, or sensuous—none of this need bother her admirers, for a highly literate spokesman is very sustaining to those who have discarded or not acquired intellectual literacy. Second only to Miss Sontag in trumpeting the new sensibility is Leslie Fiedler, a critic with an amiable weakness for thrusting himself at the head of parades marching into sight.†

* Reviewing a theatrical grope-in called *Dionysus in 69* (*New Republic*, August 10, 1968), Brustein pulls back a little from his enthusiasm for the swinging new. He remarks that in *Dionysus* "the pelvis becomes the actor's primary organ of expression" and that "only about a third of Euripides's play" *The Bacchae* is used in this "adaptation." (But why even a third? Who needs words at all?) And then says Brustein: "The off-off-Broadway movement which began so promisingly with *America Hurrah, MacBird,* and the experimental probes of the Open Theatre, is now cultivating its worst faults, developing an anarchic Philistinism which virtually throws the writer out of the theater."

But if what the Dean of the Yale Drama School counterposes to *Dionysus in 69* is *America Hurrah* and *MacBird*—noisy, coarse, derivative, and third-rate—how can he possibly bring to bear serious critical standards?

† Fiedler's essay "The New Mutants" (*Partisan Review*, Fall 1965) is a sympathetic charting of the new sensibility, with discussions of "porno-esthetics," the effort among young people to abandon habits and symbols of masculinity in favor of a feminized receptiveness, "the aspiration to take the final evolutionary leap and cast off adulthood completely," and above all, the role of drugs as "the crux of the futurist revolt."

With uncharacteristic forebearance, Fiedler denies himself any sustained or explicit judgments of this "futurist revolt," so that the rhetorical thrust of his essay is somewhere between acclaim and resignation. He cannot completely suppress his mind, perhaps because he has been using it too long, and so we find this acute passage concerning the responses of older writers to "the most obscene forays of the young":

> . . . after a while, there will be no more Philip Rahvs and Stanley Edgar Hymans left to shock—anti-language becoming mere language with repeated use and in the face of acceptance; so that all sense of exhilaration will be lost along with the possibility of offense. What to do then except to choose silence, since raising the ante of violence is ultimately self-defeating; and the way of obscenity in any case leads as naturally to silence as to further excess?

About drugs Fiedler betrays no equivalent skepticism, so that it is hard to disagree with Lionel Abel's judgment that, "while I do not want to charge Mr. Fieldler with recommending the taking of drugs, I think his whole essay is a confession that he cannot call upon one value in whose name he could oppose it."

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But for those New York (or any other) writers not quite enchanted with the current scene there are serious difficulties.

They cannot be quite *sure*. Having fought in the later battles for modernism, they must acknowledge to themselves the possibility that, now grown older, they have lost their capacity to appreciate innovation. Why, they ask themselves with some irony, should "their" cultural revolution have been the last one, or the last good one? From the publicists of the new sensibility they hear the very slogans, catchwords, and stirring appeals which a few decades ago they were hurling in behalf of modernism and against such diehards as Van Wyck Brooks and Bernard de Voto. And given the notorious difficulties in making judgments about contemporary works of art, how can they be certain that Kafka is a master of despair and Burroughs a symptom of disintegration, Pollack a pioneer of innovation and Warhol a triviality of pop? The capacity for self-doubt, the habit of self-irony, which is the reward of decades of experience renders them susceptible to the simplistic cries of the new.

Well, the answer is that there can be no certainty: we should neither want nor need it. One must speak out of one's taste and conviction, and let history make whatever judgments it will care to. But this is not an easy stand to take, for it means that after all these years one may have to face intellectual isolation and perhaps dismissal, and there are moments when it must seem as if the best course is to be promiscuously "receptive," swinging along with a grin of resignation.

IN THE FACE of this challenge, surely the most serious of the last twenty-five years, the New York intellectuals have not been able to mount a coherent response, certainly not a judgment sufficiently inclusive and severe. There have been a few efforts, some intellectual polemics by Lionel Abel and literary pieces by Philip Rahv; but no more. Yet if ever there was a moment when our culture needed an austere and sharp criticism—the one talent the New York writers supposedly find it death to hide—it is today. One could imagine a journal with the standards, if hopefully not the parochialism, of *Scrutiny*. One could imagine a journal like *Partisan Review* stripping the pretensions of the current scene with the vigor it showed in opposing the Popular Front and neo-conservative cultures. But these are fantasies. In its often accomplished pages *Partisan Review* betrays a hopeless clash between its editors' capacity to apply serious standards and their yearnings to embrace the moment. Predictably, the result satisfies no one.

One example of the failure of the New York writers to engage in criticism is their relation to Norman Mailer. He is not an easy man to come to grips with, for he is "our genius," probably the only one, and in more than a merely personal way he is a man of enormous charm. Yet Mailer has been the central and certainly most dramatic presence in the new sensibility, even if in reflective moments he makes clear his ability to brush aside its incantations.* Mailer as thaumaturgist of orgasm; as metaphysician of the gut; as psychic herb-doctor; as advance man for literary violence;* as dialectician of unreason; and above all, as a novelist who has laid waste his own formidable talent—these masks of brilliant, nutty restlessness, these papery dikes against squalls of boredom—all require sharp analysis and criticism. Were Mailer to read these lines he would surely grin and exclaim that, whatever else, his books have suffered plenty of denunciation. My point, however, is not that he has failed to receive adverse reviews, including some from such New York critics as Norman Podhoretz, Elizabeth Hardwick, and Philip Rahv; perhaps he has even had too many adverse reviews, given the scope and brightness of his talent. My point is that the New York writers have failed to confront Mailer seriously as an intellectual spokesman, a cultural agent, and instead have found it easier to regard him as a hostage to the temper of our times. What has not been forthcoming is a recognition, surely a painful one, that in his major public roles he has come to represent values in deep opposition to liberal humaneness and rational discourse. That the New York critics have refused him this confrontation is both a disservice to Mailer and a sign that, whatever it may once have been, the New York intellectual community no longer exists as a significant force.

An equally telling sign is the recent growth in popularity and influence of the *New York Review of Books*. Emerging at least in part from the New York intellectual milieu, this journal has steadily moved away from the styles and premises with which it began. Its early dependence on those New York writers who lent their names to it and helped establish it seems all but over. The Jew-

* Two examples:
"Tom Hayden began to discuss revolution with Mailer. 'I'm for Kennedy,' said Mailer, 'because I'm not so sure I want a revolution. Some of those kids are awfully dumb.' Hayden the Revolutionary said a vote for George Wallace would further his objective more than a vote for RFK." (*Village Voice*, May 30, 1968—and by the way, some Revolutionary!)
"If he still took a toke of marijuana from time to time for Auld Lang Syne, or in recognition of the probability that good sex had to be awfully good before it was better than on pot, yet, still!—Mailer was not in approval of any drug, he was virtually conservative about it, having demanded of his 18-year-old daughter . . . that she not take marijuana, and never LSD, until she completed her education, a mean promise to extract in these apocalyptic times." (*The Armies of the Night*).

* In this regard the editor of *Dissent* bears a heavy responsibility. When he first received the manuscript of "The White Negro," he should have expressed in print his objections to the passage in which Mailer discusses the morality of beating up a fifty-year-old storekeeper. That he could not bring himself to risk losing a scoop is no excuse whatever.

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ish imprint has been blotted out; the *New York Review*, for all its sharp attacks on current political policies, is thoroughly at home in the worlds of American culture, publishing, and society. It features a strong Anglophile slant in its literary pieces, perhaps in accord with the *New Statesman* formula of blending leftish (and at one time, fellow-traveling) politics with Bloomsbury culture, Kingsley Martin with tips on wine. More precisely, what the *New York Review* has managed to achieve—I find it quite fascinating as a portent of things to come—is a link between campus "leftism" and East Side stylishness, the worlds of Tom Hayden and George Plimpton. Opposition to Communist politics and ideology is frequently presented in the pages of the *New York Review* as if it were an obsolete, indeed a pathetic, hangover from a discredited past or worse yet, a dark sign of the CIA. A snappish and crude anti-Americanism has swept over much of its political writing—and to avoid misunderstanding, let me say that by this I do not mean anything so necessary as attacks on the ghastly Vietnam war or on our failures in the cities. And in the hands of writers like Andrew Kopkind (author of the immortal phrase, "morality . . . starts at the barrel of a gun"), liberal values and norms are treated with something very close to contempt.

Though itself too sophisticated to indulge in the more preposterous New Left notions, such as "liberal fascism" and "confrontationism," the *New York Review* has done the New Left the considerable service of providing it with a link of intellectual respectability to the academic world. In the materials it has published by Kopkind, Tom Hayden, Philip Rahv, Edgar Z. Friedenberg, Jason Epstein, and others, one finds not an acceptance of the fashionable talk about "revolution" which has become an indoor and outdoor sport on the American campus, but a kind of rhetorical violence, a verbal "radicalism," which gives moral and intellectual encouragement to precisely such fashionable (self-defeating) talk.

This is by no means the only kind of political material to have appeared in the *New York Review*; at least in my own experience I have found its editors prepared to print articles of a sharply different kind; and in recent years it has published serious political criticism by George Lichtheim, Theodore Draper, and Walter Laqueur.

And because it is concerned with maintaining a certain level of sophistication and accomplishment, the *New York Review* has not simply taken over the new sensibility. No, at stake here is the dominant tone of this skillfully edited paper, an editorial keenness in responding to the current academic and intellectual temper—as for instance in that memorable issue with a cover featuring, no doubt for the benefit of its university readers, a diagram explaining how to make a Molotov cocktail. The genius of the *New York Review*, and it has been a genius of sorts, is not, in either politics or culture, for swimming against the stream.

PERHAPS IT IS all too late. Perhaps there is no longer available among the New York writers enough energy and coherence to make possible a sustained confrontation with the new sensibility. Still, one would imagine that their undimmed sense of the *Zeitgeist* would prod them to sharp responses, precise statements, polemical assaults. What, after all, would be risked in saying that we have entered a period of overwhelming cultural sleaziness?

Having been formed by, and through opposition to, the New York intellectual experience, I cannot look with joy at the prospect of its ending. But neither with dismay. Such breakups are inevitable, and out of them come new voices and energies. Yet, precisely at this moment of dispersion, might not some of the New York writers achieve renewed strength if they were to struggle once again for whatever has been salvaged from these last few decades? For the values of liberalism, for the politics of a democratic radicalism, for the norms of rationality and intelligence, for the standards of literary seriousness, for the life of the mind as a humane dedication—for all this it should again be worth finding themselves in a minority, even a beleaguered minority, and not with fantasies of martyrdom but with a quiet recognition that for the intellectual this is likely to be his usual condition.

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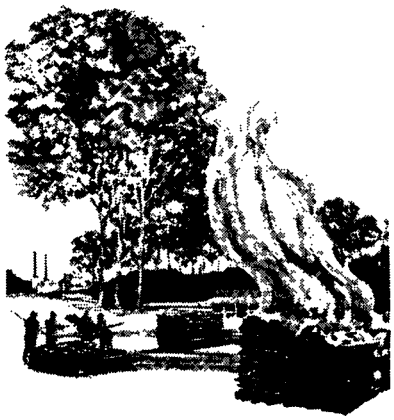

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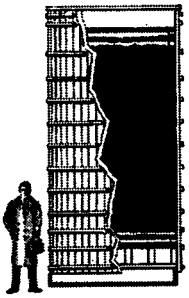

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The Curious Case of Kol Nidre

Herman Kieval

All vows, renunciations, promises, obligations, oaths, taken from this Day of Atonement till the next, may we attain it in peace, we regret them in advance. May we be absolved of them, may we be released from them, may they be null and void and of no effect. May they not be binding upon us. Such vows shall not be considered vows; such renunciations, no renunciations; and such oaths, no oaths. (Translation adapted from the High Holyday Prayer Book, edited by Rabbi Ben Zion Bokser.)

IN OUR TIME, the best-known ritual of the High Holy Day services—not only among Jews but among Christians as well—is unquestionably Kol Nidre. Highlighted by its strategic location at the very inauguration of the 24-hour fast of Atonement, and chanted in a traditional melody of great spiritual force, Kol Nidre exerts an enormous impact. Yet few of the millions who experience that impact every year are aware of the paradoxical and controversial history of the Kol Nidre rite. The first of these paradoxes lies in the fact that Kol Nidre is not even a prayer, but rather a legal formula for the annulment of certain types of vows. The name of God is never mentioned. The language is a curious mixture of Aramaic—the Jewish vernacular of the Talmudic period—and Hebrew—the language of classical Jewish prayer. The style is prosaic, the wording technical. Moreover, although Kol Nidre has become virtually synonymous with the Day of Atonement, it is not, strictly speaking, part of the Yom Kippur liturgy; it is a prefatory declaration which must be recited before the sunset which ushers in the holy day.

Even more paradoxical, in view of its enormous popularity, Kol Nidre has had to survive centuries of powerful and persistent opposition, expressed not only by enemies and detractors of Judaism but even by eminent rabbis who have challenged the very principle underlying its recitation—the concept of a blanket annulment of sacred vows. In response to these criticisms, the text of Kol Nidre has been amended to such an extent that the version in most common use today defies the laws of logic and syntax alike.

That a disputed formula like Kol Nidre should eventually have won a central place in the standard liturgy is a phenomenon that defies complete comprehension. An old rabbinic proverb states that everything needs *mazal* (good fortune), even the Torah scroll in the Ark; for where there are many scrolls available, it is often a matter of chance which is selected to be read. At least part of the "success" of Kol Nidre must be attributed to a series of accidents which we shall note as we examine the improbable story of this rite.

NO ONE has been able to determine just where and when Kol Nidre originated and under what special circumstances, if any. We do not know who the author was, whether the original language was Hebrew or Aramaic, nor exactly when or how its long struggle for acceptance into the Yom Kippur liturgy was won. There are many theories—some so dramatic as to border on fantasy—which attempt to solve the mysteries, but none is conclusive.

One of these mysteries is why the ritual for the dispensation of vows should have, in the first instance, been associated with the Day of Atonement. Actually the Talmudic passage which provides the legal basis for Kol Nidre speaks *not* of Yom Kippur but of Rosh Hashanah: "He who desires that none of his vows made during the year shall be valid, let him stand at the beginning of the year [Hebrew, *Rosh Hashanah*] and declare, 'every vow [Hebrew, *kol neder*] which I may make in the future shall be null.'" Pious Jews still follow a procedure based on this original practice: after the morning worship on the day preceding Rosh Hashanah, they petition a "court" of three learned men to hear declarations pertaining both to vows unwittingly neglected during the past year and those which might be improperly taken during the year about to begin. However, the procedure originally established for the day before Rosh Hashanah was shifted to the eve of Yom Kippur sometime during the post-Talmudic period. The medieval authorities explain that this was done in order to accommodate the rank-and-file worshippers who did not

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come to the synagogue on the day before New Year but did so on the eve of the Atonement worship. Here is one of those many curious accidents which rescued Kol Nidre from obscurity and helped to transform a dry legal formula, written in a confusion of tongues and tenses, and plagued by both legal and ethical problems, into the most prominent ritual of the High Holy Days.

THE VOW *(neder)* is one of the earliest forms of prayer known to Scripture, but a growing religious sophistication over the centuries led to a downgrading of this primitive form of prayer. The Pharisees, for example, took a dim view of candidates for their fellowship who were prone to the making of vows. Indeed, the Torah itself discourages vowing: "When you make a vow to the Lord your God, do not put off fulfilling it, for the Lord your God will require it of you, and you will have incurred guilt; whereas you incur *no guilt if you refrain from vowing*" (Deuteronomy 23:21-23). The Torah further provides for the annulment of certain vows, notably those made by females who are legally within the jurisdiction of their father or husband (Numbers 30). And Scripture, generally, cautions against vows lightly taken: "Be not rash with your mouth, and let not your heart be hasty to utter a word before God . . . better it is that you should not vow, than that you should vow and not pay. Allow not your mouth to bring your flesh to guilt . . . but fear God" (Ecclesiastes 5:1,4,6).

The post-biblical moralists shared this attitude and tried to dissuade Jews from resorting to vows as a demonstration of piety. In the period of the Mishnah, the habit of making vows was held to be a mark of low breeding. Some of the rabbis permitted the use of vows as a means of reinforcing resolutions to replace bad habits with good ones, but others disapproved. A favorite Talmudic maxim says, "It is sufficient for you [to limit yourself] to that which the Torah forbids." In third-century Babylonia, the distinguished Amora Samuel derogated those who, like the Nazarite, adopted vows of abstinence: "Even though he fulfills [the vow], he is called wicked." The Palestinian authorities were inclined to be more indulgent than their Babylonian colleagues in the matter of vowing; yet it was a Palestinian Tanna, Rabbi Nathan, who said: "One who vows is as though he built a high place, and he who fulfills it as though he sacrificed thereon."

Despite such injunctions, not every Jew could resist the habits of centuries of Oriental vow-making. Thus the legal authorities in the Talmudic period had to cope with the dilemma of preserving the sanctity of the pledged word in a society that continued to make ill-considered vows. The problems—legal and moral—which perplexed the most eminent rabbis in the matter of the dispensation of the many types of vows, oaths, etc., are so complex and subtle that it is impossible to discuss them here in detail. Two entire tractates of the Talmud *(Nedarim* and *Shevuot)* deal directly with these issues, to say nothing of discussions in other tractates. Chief Rabbi Hertz, in his commentary on the Pentateuch, gives this vivid summary:

> Altogether aside from imbecile and rash minds, men in time of danger or under momentary impulse would make vows which they could not fulfill. . . . In such cases, the rabbis would consider it their duty to afford a man the facility, under certain definite conditions and restrictions, of *annulling* his thoughtless or impossible vows. Such annulment could never be effected by himself, but only by a Beth Din of three learned men in the Law, after they had carefully investigated the nature and bearing of the vow, and had become convinced that its purpose was not, on the one hand, self-improvement, nor did it, on the other, infringe upon the rights of others. For not all vows or oaths could be absolved. A vow or oath that was made to another person, even be that person a child or a heathen, could not be annulled except in the presence of that person and with his consent; while *an oath which a man had taken in a court of justice, could not be absolved by any other authority in the world* [Italics in original].

THE PRACTICE of annulling vows which had been made by *individuals* through the agency of a legal expert or an *ad hoc* "court" of three laymen originated in Palestine; but the first references to a specific "Kol Nidre" formula for *collective* use are found in the legal responsa of the Babylonian Geonim, beginning in the 8th century. These powerful authorities, however, far from approving the practice familiar to them from "other lands," violently condemned it, with outstanding Geonim—Yehudai, Natronai, Amram, and Hai, the son of Nahshon—going so far as to forbid the recitation of Kol Nidre. Amram's historic "Order of Prayers," composed about 870, preserves a complete text of Kol Nidre (largely in Hebrew) but he prohibits its use, calling it *minhag sh'tut,* "a foolish custom" (he was probably quoting Natronai here).

What prompted the Babylonian authorities to take such a negative attitude? On the surface, the objections appear to be purely legalistic; but the passion, which is only partially hidden by their technical language, suggests that the Geonim were fighting a losing battle against a highly popular practice. Both Salo W. Baron and Cyrus H. Gordon believe that the geonic opposition to Kol Nidre was connected with an opposition to magic. Thus Gordon points out striking parallels between the Aramaic text of Kol Nidre and texts in the same language inscribed on magical incantation bowls which were popular in Babylonia around 500 C.E. According to this view, the

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function of Kol Nidre was "the annulment of curses or oaths (originally *not* in the sense of promises or contractual obligations) that touch off evil forces in the community."

But the geonic opposition to Kol Nidre was not monolithic. A difference of opinion existed—at least during certain periods—between the two great Babylonian academies, the authorities at Pumbedita taking a more lenient view, probably in response to popular clamor, than those at Sura. By the time of Hai Gaon (son of Sherira Gaon), who flourished in Pumbedita about the year 1000, some form of Kol Nidre declaration appears to have gained general acceptance throughout Babylonia and the far-flung Jewries which accepted geonic authority. Unfortunately, the liturgical writings of Hai, the most influential of the Geonim of Pumbedita, have been lost and the quotations in later medieval writers are often inaccurate. We do not know, therefore, the exact wording of the Kol Nidre formula approved by Hai.

But what we do know is the principle underlying the Babylonian compromise on a permissible Kol Nidre formula. The Geonim rejected the concept that vows might be annulled either retroactively or in advance, a practice which had been permitted in Palestine under carefully controlled conditions. Fearful of the moral implications of such procedures, the Geonim permitted only a Kol Nidre formula which achieved the purely religious purpose of seeking divine "pardon, forgiveness, and atonement" *(mehilah selihah v-kapparah)* for the sin incurred in failing to keep a solemn vow (or, possibly, for having made a vow in the first instance). This purely religious function of the Kol Nidre declaration was made explicit by the closing formula: "as it is written in Thy Torah, 'The whole Israelite community and the stranger residing among you shall be forgiven, for it happened to the entire people through *error*'" (Numbers 15:26). The period of time covered by the declaration was always the year just concluded; consequently the characteristic phrase of the geonic Kol Nidre is, "from the previous Yom Kippur until this Yom Kippur."

The Babylonian version of Kol Nidre, however, is not the familiar formula which is used in the overwhelming majority of Jewish communities today. The Jewries of western and northern Europe, which did not recognize the hegemony of Babylonia, also did not accept the Kol Nidre text of the Geonim. In the 12th century a further major change was to be introduced into this ritual by the Tosafists ("Supplementers") of France and Germany, from whom the Ashkenazic Rite eventually derived. These influential scholars, reverting to the original practice of Palestinian Jewry as recorded in the Mishnah, recast the Kol Nidre formula as an *anticipatory* cancellation of vows, oaths, etc., which might be taken "from *this* Yom Kippur until *next* Yom Kippur." They excluded vows taken during the *past* year because the Talmud rules that vows already contracted cannot be annulled unless the votary explicitly states the content of his vow and voices penitence for his change of heart *(haratah)* before a legal expert or a court of three knowledgeable laymen. None of these conditions was required in the Kol Nidre formula accepted by the Babylonian Geonim. One of the most important of the Tosafists, Rabbenu Tam, desired, indeed, to transform all the verbs of the old Kol Nidre formula from the past to the future tense. His lack of success on this point has bequeathed to the Ashkenazic posterity a grammatical monstrosity: the time period mentioned is "from *this* Yom Kippur until *next* Yom Kippur," yet all the verbs ("which we have vowed," etc.) are in the *past* tense. Later efforts to remove these contradictions—from R. Mordecai Jaffe of Prague, in the late 16th century, to R. Wolf Heidenheim, in early 19th-century Germany—have been conspicuously unsuccessful.

The legal arguments of Rabbenu Tam and his father, R. Meir ben Samuel, were not accepted uncritically by later Ashkenazic authorities. Such distinguished rabbis as R. Mordecai Jaffe, the Vilna Gaon, and R. Jacob Emden took issue with some of the legalistic assumptions on which the new Kol Nidre was based. Nevertheless, Rabbenu Tam's version (also known as the Aramaic version) has remained the standard Kol Nidre in Ashkenazic congregations to this day. This is not to say that the older (or Hebrew) version of the Babylonian Geonim was entirely displaced. The Romanian (Balkan) Rite, which has long been obsolete, and the Italian Rite, preserved today in only a handful of congregations, retained the old geonic Kol Nidre in its Hebrew form. The Sephardim of the West recite only part of the geonic text, notably its concentration on the vows of the past year, while the Oriental Sephardim and the Yemenites have compromised by adding the emendations of Rabbenu Tam to the older geonic version.

Not all the opposition to Kol Nidre has come from within Jewish ranks or from sectarian groups (like the Karaites). Throughout the Middle Ages in Christian Europe, Kol Nidre was seized upon as a prime weapon in the continuing campaign to vilify the character of the Jew. Accusations were constantly leveled against the "perfidious" children of Israel whose religion permitted them to perjure themselves in their dealings with Christians and then—on the holiest of festivals—clear their consciences simply by reciting the Kol Nidre. It was on the basis of such accusations that the notorious "Jew's-oath" was instituted by Christian courts.

Kol Nidre made trouble for the Jews in other

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ways too. Several public disputations between learned rabbis and churchmen in the 13th century included controversy over the legitimacy of Kol Nidre. In the 17th century, Manasseh ben Israel, the famed rabbi-statesman of Amsterdam, had to defend the ethical character of Kol Nidre in the course of negotiating with Oliver Cromwell to permit the return of Jews to England (whence they had been expelled in 1290). The governmental machinery of Tsarist Russia was likewise concerned with the legitimacy of Kol Nidre. On October 25, 1857, after repeated complaints from unfriendly quarters to the Russian authorities touching on the rights of Jews in the province of Kurland, the authorities issued an order prescribing a special Hebrew introduction to Kol Nidre, which stated explicitly that the declaration was valid only for vows exclusively involving the person who made them but no other human being.

The Jewish defense of Kol Nidre always was that the declaration applied only to the relations between man and God, not to contractual obligations between man and man: "For transgressions between a man and his fellow man, Yom Kippur does not effect atonement until he shall have first appeased his fellow man" (Yoma 9:9). Yet many defenders of Kol Nidre were themselves uneasy about it, haunted by the well-known criticism of illustrious rabbis, both Sephardic and Ashkenazic. Thus in 12th-century Spain, R. Judah ben Barzillai declared the recitation of Kol Nidre to be dangerous, since ignorant Jews might erroneously conclude that all their vows and oaths were annulled through this declaration and, consequently, would take obligations upon themselves without due caution. In 13th-century Italy, R. Zedekiah ben Abraham Ha-Rofe opposed the practice of absolving vows and cited the opinion of some authorities "that Kol Nidre was intended only for *impulsive* vows which the Mishnah deems to be not binding, so that people might learn that even in such matters our yea must be yea and our nay, nay." R. Jeroham ben Meshullam, of 14th-century Provence, attacked "those fools who, trusting to the Kol Nidre, make vows recklessly." Even the *Shulhan Arukh*, the standard code of Jewish law, recognizes that the legality of Kol Nidre rests on precarious foundations.

AGAINST THIS centuries-old background of controversy, it is not surprising that Kol Nidre was one of the early targets of the Reform movement which arose in 19th-century Germany. In 1844, the first conference of Reform leaders decided to expunge the ancient ritual entirely from the Yom Kippur liturgy, and several attempts were subsequently made by both German and American Reformers to substitute an acceptable prayer in its place. Abraham Geiger's Breslau Prayerbook (1854) contains an original prayer, *Kol pesha'ai* ("All my iniquities, etc."). The Berlin Prayerbook and the older editions of the Union Prayerbook (of the American Reform movement) substituted the 130th Psalm, a most appropriate selection since it had introduced the Yom Kippur evening service in ancient Palestine long before there ever was a Kol Nidre. But once again, the incredible resilience of the traditional Kol Nidre ritual made itself felt: in the most recent edition of the Union Prayerbook (1961), Kol Nidre has been restored with its full Aramaic text.

In the United States, also, the Reconstructionist movement attempted to abolish the recitation of Kol Nidre. But the movement's founder, Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan, later reinstated the ritual, with an emendation specifying that Kol Nidre refers only to the annulment of vows made in such a way "as to estrange ourselves from those who have offended us, or to give pain to those who have angered us. . . . These our vows, and these only, shall not be vows. . . ." This revised Kol Nidre text was incorporated into the Reconstructionist High Holy Day Prayerbook (1948) and is used in a small number of congregations.

IT SHOULD BE obvious that the phenomenal capacity of Kol Nidre to withstand so many vicissitudes over the centuries cannot be explained in purely rational terms. Due regard must be given to other factors, foremost among them the powerful folk tradition that has long associated Kol Nidre with Jewish martyrdom, especially at the hands of the Spanish Inquisition. The fact that this deeply rooted tradition cannot be substantiated by firm historical evidence has not in the least dimmed the mystical aura with which it has surrounded an otherwise undramatic legal formula of dubious provenance.

The legendary association of Kol Nidre (and its various musical settings) with Jewish martyrdom was given some scholarly underpinning in 1917 by Joseph S. Bloch who attempted to trace the origin of the ritual to the persecution of Jews in 7th-century Spain by the Visigoths. According to Bloch, these barbarian conquerors, themselves freshly converted to Christianity, forced the Jews of their Spanish domains to renounce their religion and vow their acceptance of the Christian faith. But the forced converts remained secretly faithful to their ancestral religion, and when Yom Kippur came, they would observe it surreptitiously. Nevertheless, feeling they had broken the solemn oath given, albeit under duress, to their Christian persecutors, they recited Kol Nidre to voice grief over their apostasy and simultaneously to seek God's forgiveness for, and absolution from, their unwilling vows. This, Bloch suggests, is the reason that Kol Nidre is recited before the prayers of Yom Kippur proper begin. Bloch further argues that Jews suffered

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similar persecution in the Byzantine Empire (700-850) and utilized Kol Nidre in the same fashion, as also did the Marranos who secretly practiced Judaism after being forcibly converted by the Spanish Inquisition (1391-1492).

Though Bloch's theory has not won scholarly acceptance, it is probably true that "secret Jews," in various times and places, did utilize Kol Nidre as a means of absolving themselves from vows made under coercion. In any case, there is a very long history in Jewish writings, going back to ancient rabbinic literature, of explaining innovations and peculiarities in worship and ritual in terms of persecutions at the hands of a variety of enemies. Whatever the merits or demerits of any particular theory of this type, the overall effect has generally been further to endear the prayer in question to the Jewish people. Thus, Bloch's theory is reputed to have moved a number of European synagogues to restore Kol Nidre after it had been dropped from the service.

THE PLAINTIVE melody of Kol Nidre has been scarcely less important than the martyrdom tradition as a factor protecting the embattled formula against its critics and enemies. Indeed, the music itself has been associated by popular tradition with persecution and martyrdom. For this notion there is no historical basis whatsoever, yet the myth dies hard. The history of the Kol Nidre music is as obscure as that of the words; and, as with the text, there are a number of versions. To name only the best-known, there is the familiar Ashkenazic melody and the two current Sephardic melodies: one for the Western and the other for the Oriental communities, both based on the mode of *Selihot* (prayers of penitence) and both quite different from the Ashkenazic.

The earliest reference to a Kol Nidre melody comes, ironically, from one of the ritual's enemies, the Karaite, Judah Hadassi of 12th-century Jerusalem. The procedure, still current, of chanting the Kol Nidre formula three times is recorded in *Mahzor Vitry*, a 12th-century record of the liturgical practices of Old-French Jewry. Each of the repetitions was intended to convey particular thoughts and emotions, and it is probable that the early *Hazzanim* improvised in order to express these ideas. In the course of time, certain melodies must themselves have become traditional. For example, we know that in the early 15th century R. Jacob Moelin (Maharil), the father of the Ashkenazic mode of worship, had his own special melody for Kol Nidre. And so well entrenched was the melody used in Prague at the end of the 16th century that the codifier R. Mordecai Jaffe could write: "Most of the text of Kol Nidre, as it is now printed in the *Mahzorim*, makes no sense and is quite unintelligible; the only thing that gives it substance and meaning is the melody. But they [i.e., the cantors] do not know or understand what they are reciting. Many times have I attempted to correct the wording and teach my improved version to the *Hazzanim*; but they were unable to incorporate the changes in the course of their chanting because they are too attached to the old melody which fits the familiar text."

Since Kol Nidre is neither a prayer nor a hymn, it is difficult from a purely liturgical standpoint to understand why such an elaborate chant should have been provided for it in the first instance. The great Jewish musicologist, A. Z. Idelsohn, conjectured that the *Hazzanim* were obliged to improvise a melody because of certain legalistic and practical considerations: they had to begin Kol Nidre while it was still daylight and prolong its recitation until sunset; moreover, in order to enable the late-comers among the congregation to hear Kol Nidre, they would have to repeat it several times. In the course of time, an elaborate melody evolved.

The Kol Nidre chant has captivated Christians as well as Jews. Long before the advent of the ecumenical age, it had become routine for Christians to visit synagogues on Kol Nidre night to hear the melody which Tolstoy once described as "one that echoes the story of the great martyrdom of a grief-stricken nation." This melody has also found its way into the work of such non-Jewish composers as Beethoven (the penultimate movement of the G minor Quartet, opus 131, and the first movement of the Trio, opus 9, no. 3) and Bruch (the well-known cello Concerto entitled "Kol Nidre").*

THE SETTING of the Kol Nidre service has perhaps been no less instrumental than the melody in establishing its wide appeal. The details vary from one regional or local rite to another, but the general pattern is similar. In every case, Kol Nidre is recited as a prelude to Yom Kippur. The reason is that the Talmud prohibits the asking for absolution of vows on a Sabbath or Festival unless the vows directly concern these holy days. Thus, by virtue of a minor point of law, Kol Nidre received the prominent position it holds at the very inauguration of the most sacred day of the Jewish year.

This happy accident entailed yet another which served to enhance the power of the ritual —the wearing of the *Tallit*. The fringed prayer-shawl is not worn at night and would ordinarily play no role at the evening service which ushers in the Day of Atonement. Since, however, the service on this occasion begins before sunset, it is permissible—and customary in nearly all communities—for men to wrap themselves in the full regalia of prayer.

* The composition for speaker, mixed chorus, and orchestra entitled "Kol Nidre" (opus 39), by Arnold Schoenberg, does not use the traditional melody; it is an entirely new musical treatment of the text.

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In practically all communities, the Kol Nidre ceremonial begins with a dramatic opening of the *Aron Ha-Kodesh,* the Holy Ark. The white *parokhet* (curtain) is drawn, revealing the massed scrolls of the Torah, which are likewise vested in white—the traditional color for the Days of Awe, symbolizing the themes of purity and atonement as well as the confidence of the penitent. One, or, more commonly, a number of scrolls is removed; tradition requires that at least one scroll must be left in the Ark at all times. In many congregations, the scrolls are carried by the communal elders, led by the *Hazzan* and Rabbi, in solemn procession through the crowded synagogue—often to the accompaniment of chants deriving from the Kabbalistic tradition. The scrolls are usually kissed (and embraced) by the worshippers; pious Jews ask forgiveness for their neglect of the Torah throughout the year past and resolve to show greater devotion in the future. When the procession returns to the *Bimah,* some communities restore the scrolls to the Ark immediately but most retain two of them to be held by distinguished members of the congregation who stand at either side of the *Hazzan* until the Kol Nidre rite is completed.

The climax of the entire ceremonial is reached with the chanting of the Kol Nidre formula proper. In all but a few obsolete rites, the ancient words (for reasons already mentioned) are recited three times. The melody is begun almost in a whisper, gradually increasing in volume until it reaches a crescendo of clear, resonant tones, as prescribed in the 12th-century *Mahzor Vitry*: "The first time he [the Reader] must utter it very softly, like one who hesitates to enter the palace of the King to ask a gift of Him whom he fears to approach; the second time he may speak somewhat louder; and the third time more loudly still, as one who is accustomed to dwell at court and to approach his Sovereign as a friend."

WILL KOL NIDRE continue to retain its force in the generations to come? It is hard to imagine otherwise. The psychoanalyst Theodor Reik contends that even Jews totally removed from any formal ties with Judaism are susceptible to Kol Nidre which, he believes, speaks to the collective Jewish unconscious of its deepest tribal memories. Such, at any rate, seems to have been the case with lapsed Jews like Heinrich Heine, Edmond Fleg, Theodor Herzl, and Franz Rosenzweig (who was dissuaded from converting to Christianity by an exposure to the Yom Kippur service). It also seems to be the case today with many anti-religious Israelis—not to mention American and Russian Jews of similar bent. And this too is one of the many paradoxes surrounding the long and curious history of the Kol Nidre rite.

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The Manifold Lives of Cyrus Adler

Cyrus Adler was one of those rare people who, from time to time, come along to astonish the world with the vast variety of their activities. At the age of 20, he received his B.A. from the University of Pennsylvania and promptly enrolled in the graduate school of Johns Hopkins. There he became the first student to attain a Ph. D. in Semitics in an American university.

Shortly after his graduation Adler became an Associate Professor in Semitics. He found the time to become Assistant Curator of the U.S. National Museum. In 1892, Adler was named Librarian of the Smithsonian Institution, whose Assistant Secretary he became seven years later. One would think he had made his mark, but his career was just beginning.

While still at the Smithsonian, Adler had a hand in establishing the Jewish Theological Seminary and the Jewish Publication Society. He was a founder of the American Jewish Historical Society and an editor of the Jewish Encyclopedia In 1908, he left the Smithsonian to take the post of President of Dropsie College.

Adler's unflagging energy saw him head a project to furnish a new authoritative translation of the Bible; he helped create the American Jewish Committee; and he became President of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

When Adler died in 1940, this tribute to his accomplishments was paid by President Franklin D. Roosevelt: "Scholar, patriot, humanitarian and religious leader . . . an earnest worker in the cause of peace and advocate of good will among men."

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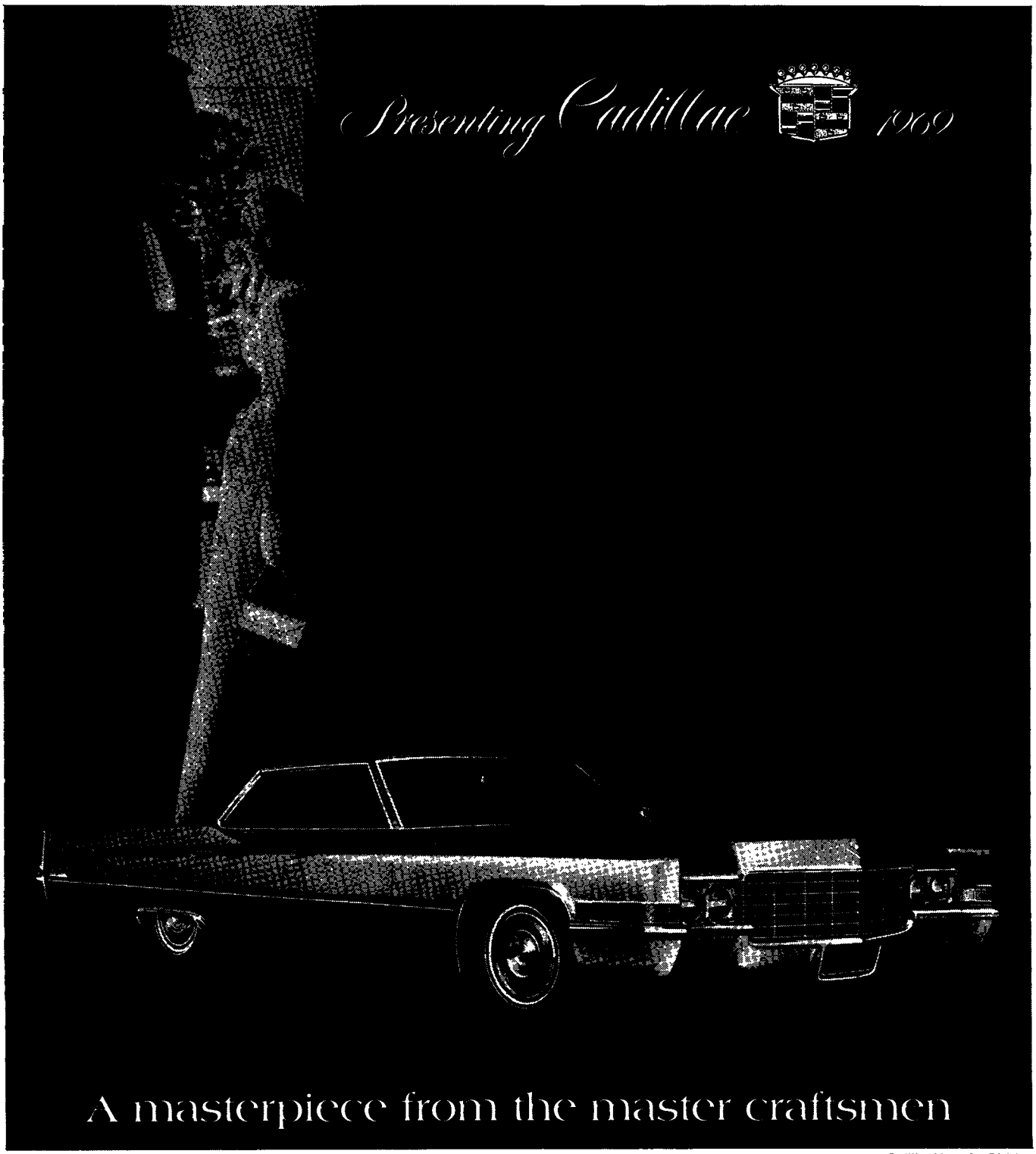

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Rhetoric & the Arab Mind

Robert Alter

IT IS NATURAL enough that the parties to any conflict should construct onesided versions of the nature of the conflict, and therefore it is also understandable that the desire to be fair should lead uninvolved observers to assume as a matter of principle something like a parity between the claims of both sides. The way this familiar scheme works in the case of the Middle-East conflict is clear. The Arabs see the Israelis as invaders, interlopers, usurpers of the Arab homeland, who in the name of simple justice must be expelled. The official Zionist position, on the other hand, has been that the Jews have done nothing more than return peacefully to their own historic land, where in any case there had never been an Arab national state or Arab national consciousness, and that the immense labors of rehabilitation and modernization of the Jewish settlement would bring vast benefits to all the inhabitants of the region, were it not for the gratuitous hostility of the Arabs. (It is worth noting here that in Israel the general effect of the Six-Day War seems to have been to polarize opinion on the ultimate nature of the conflict. Those Israelis who began to speak in quasi-religious terms of a historical destiny to maintain the borders of a Greater Israel were implicitly rejecting the possibility that there could be any right on the Arab side of the dispute. For cooler Israeli heads, the failure of victory to bring peace any closer has driven home a new sober awareness of the seriousness with which Arabs view their own claims to the land.)

Now, against these opposing and irreconcilable versions of the conflict, there has been a tendency among many commentators in America and Europe to strike a neat balance between the two sides. As so often in history, the argument runs, we find two different peoples contending for the same patch of earth, each convinced that its own rights are exclusive. The obvious solution, then, is for each side to recognize some minimal legitimacy in the claims of the other; such a recognition will lead to mutual concessions, general compromise, and finally to some approximation of peace. One hears this note, for example, in the editorials of the New York *Times*, which are usually pro-Israel ("rabidly Zionistic," the Arabs would have it), but which generally conclude even their denunciations of Arab intransigence with the blandly moralistic suggestion that if both sides would only be more reasonable, peace would ensue. Such statements are no doubt well-meaning, but by imagining the struggle in the Middle East in terms of a simple general model of conflicts rather than through the particular facts of the Israeli-Arab confrontation, observers of this sort evade the most painful question that the facts now pose: is conciliatory "reasonableness" at present a possible alternative, for either side?

In regard to actual policy it is often suggested, especially on the Left, that the current explosive situation in the Middle East is largely the result of Israel's unyielding position on the territories it has occupied since June 1967. After all, during the fighting the Israelis themselves claimed that their sole interest was self-defense, not territorial expansion. If they would show their good faith now by a generous unilateral gesture—giving up some or all of the territories, or perhaps establishing a genuinely independent Arab state on the West Bank, free to make whatever alliances it chose—then the Arabs would see that Israel was not an expansionist threat and would at last feel free to come to terms with the existence of the Jewish state. I must say that I find a vicious naiveté in this kind of scenario, vicious because it generally reflects a rigid determination to take a firm vew of the conflict and at the same time preserve a pristine ignorance of the facts of the case.

Perhaps the most central of these facts is the enormous lack of symmetry in the positions of the two antagonists. The Israeli position on the Arabs over the years has on occasion been stupid, blundering, unfeeling, but it has also showed aspects of common sense, even humanity, especially since June 1967, and, by and large, one can say that its guiding principle has been enlightened self-interest. The Arab position on Israel, by contrast, has been blind, fanatic, self-deceptive, self-destructive, harshly inflexible, and in many respects morally obscene.

These are strong words, but they point to a truth that must be recognized, one that has been recently documented with overwhelmingly persuasive detail in a scholarly study by Yehoshafat

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Harkabi entitled *The Arab Position in the Israeli-Arab Conflict.** Harkabi, who is lecturer in political science at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, has broad theoretical interests in the nature of conflicts, the relationship between ideology and policy, the psychological bases of nationalism—he is the author of a previous work, *Nuclear War and Nuclear Peace*—but his particular expertise is in Arab language, politics, and culture. It should be noted that before he began his academic career he served as chief of intelligence in the Israeli army. In much of what follows, I will be summarizing and quoting from Harkabi's book because I feel that the information he makes available ought to be brought to the awareness of American readers. Consequently, some words may be in order about the reliability of a writer so obviously involved on one side of the conflict.

HARKABI'S STUDY is at least in part exempt from the criticism that it represents the distorted view of an Israeli because so much of it is devoted to a simple, exhaustive documentation of the Arab view—from books, pamphlets, speeches, broadcasts, magazine and newspaper articles—by Arab leaders, ideologues, propagandists, educators, academicians, journalists, from the extreme Right to as far Left as Arabs go. But even when Harkabi is interpreting and not merely quoting, he would seem to be a generally safe guide: however lurid his material, he remains cool, judicious, reasonable, never jumping to conclusions about the connection between word and deed, or between official statement and popular feeling. He appends as a kind of epilogue to his study a chapter called "The Problem of Subjectivity," in which he analyzes the inner difficulties he tried to overcome in dealing with this subject as an Israeli, and much of his interpretation in fact reflects an impressive act of empathy—one gets a very convincing sense of how a Jewish state on Palestinian soil must look to Arab eyes. The aim Harkabi emphasizes in his conclusion is palpably present throughout the study; he surveys the Arab views not to "expose" them but because he wants to take Arabs seriously as people, to determine as precisely as possible how they really feel about Israel:

> I see a danger of dehumanizing the opponent in the conflict, which would express itself in a rejection of the possibility that he, too, can have ideas, ideologies, dreams, and a real sense of emotional attachment to this land. Without the awareness that he, too, can have aspirations and ideals that stir his soul as his own "truth," I am afraid that we will not properly understand his behavior and that we will be surprised.

What, then, do the Arabs really think about Israel, its Jewish citizens, its role in world politics? Is all the talk about "pushing Israel into the sea" merely a propagandistic flourish, an instance of the well-known Arab propensity for hyperbole, or is there some radical incompatibility between the development of Arab nationalism and the existence of a Jewish state in the Middle East? From all the varied materials surveyed by Harkabi, one inescapable conclusion emerges: that Arab nationalism, at least as it has been formulated over the past two decades, cannot in any conceivable way tolerate Israel's existence. Israel remains the stabbing cinder in the enflamed eye of Arab nationalism; for the Arab nothing will relieve the anguish it causes except its complete removal.

Why anguish? Arab spokesmen are of course keenly aware of the genuine human anguish of the Palestinian refugees and stress it again and again in their statements. If they give rather free rein to hyperbole (and perhaps self-pity), repeatedly describing the events of 1948-49 as "the greatest tragedy ever to befall a people in all of history," nevertheless the physical and mental suffering of the Palestinian Arabs can hardly be discounted, even by a partisan of Israel. It is clear, however, that for the Arabs the refugees are not the ultimate cause of the problem but only a spectacular symptom of it. What the Arabs finally are unable to accept is not so much the displacement of people as the usurpation of territory by the "Zionist hordes." From a Jewish point of view, the borders of the state before June 1967 may have seemed pinched-in, just barely viable, perhaps laughably exiguous, but from the Arab viewpoint, even with the more restricted boundaries of the 1947 UN partition Israel would still look like a murderous stake struck deep into the Arab heartland. (The one visible exception to this view is Cecil Hourani, who in an article translated in the November 1967 *Encounter* suggested that the Arabs would have been wiser to accept the original partition decision. But Hourani seems to be a voice without echo in the Arab world, and in any case he differs from other Arabs only in tactics, not in his ultimate attitude toward Israel.)

It has been the ambiguous fate of the Jews ever since biblical times to sit at the crossroads of communication, both within their land and in exile. In geopolitical terms, Israel today cuts through the middle of the Fertile Crescent, occupying the place that should logically be the center of the Arab Middle East, acting as a wedge between Egypt in the south and Syria and Lebanon in the north.† What troubles the Arabs

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**'Emdat Ha-'Aravim B'Sikhsukh Yisrael-'Arav,* Dvir Publishers, Tel Aviv. The translation of the excerpts is my own.

† All this, however, presupposes the Pan-Arab vision that has been the great will-o'-the-wisp of the several Arab states since their founding. If the Arabs, as one may hope, come to abandon the deceptive, self-damaging dream of a single "Arab nation," it would be considerably easier for the individual states to accept the existence of Israel.

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still further is their knowledge that this wedge into their world is hardly an inert body. Arab nationalism, one must keep in mind, has been a highly problematic, often painfully unsuccessful, enterprise, plagued by factionalism, floundering in its efforts at modernization, at social and economic reform, generally unable to maintain stable governments, very far from realizing its hopes of a renascence of Arab culture. In the midst of this predicament, a competing nationalism has set up shop on territory Arabs view as their own; people of a different racial stock (Arabs usually reject the idea of Semitic kinship with the Jews), coming from European backgrounds with an alien culture, have managed to establish a vigorous national state with an advanced technology, cohesive social institutions, a broadly developed educational system, flourishing arts and letters—achievements which have even won a considerable degree of international recognition. Israel, then, is not merely an intruder and not merely a challenge to Arab nationalism: its presence and its success are a constant infuriating reminder to Arabs of all their own national inadequacies.

IT IS AGAINST this background that the annihilation of the Jewish state has become one of the primary goals of Arab nationalism, and neither territorial concessions nor a change in the tenor of life in Israel could really serve as an adequate substitute for the realization of that goal. Harkabi states the case succinctly: "The opposition is not to an Israel of twenty thousand square kilometers and an acceptance of an Israel of fifteen thousand square kilometers, or an opposition to an Israel with a Western culture and an acceptance of an Israel with an Oriental culture, but rather an opposition to the existence of Israel in any form or area." After the Six-Day War, there was a good deal of talk here in America about the refugee problem as the key to the conflict. If Israel could find a dramatic solution to that problem, it was argued, Arab hostility would soon dissolve. An equitable solution to the refugee question is obviously both a moral and a political necessity, but only ignorance of the Arab position could allow anyone to think that it would end Arab opposition to Israel. Nasser himself, in a speech to the Egyptian National Council on March 26, 1964, made this point unambiguously clear: "Israel imagines that the elimination of the refugee problem will bring about the elimination of the Palestine problem, but it is in the very existence of Israel that the danger is hidden."

Some American readers may find Nasser's reference to hidden danger a little puzzling, but for Arabs that danger has the cold, hard reality of a knife-blade against the skin. As the varied materials assembled by Harkabi vividly demonstrate, the labels of "imperialism" and "colonialism" constantly attached to Israel by the Arabs (and by their leftist sympathizers elsewhere) are used with the full seriousness of conviction. First the Arabs were subjugated by two Western imperialist powers, France and England; when the oppressors left, Israel remained as their agent—though in other Arab versions the Jews are rather thought of as the secret masters of the West—to continue the despoliation of Arab land and resources. Thus the confrontation with Israel is really a confrontation with the colonialist West, and it is an added humiliation for the Arabs that their alien exploiters remain visibly present in their midst when almost all the other new nations of Africa and Asia have succeeded in "overthrowing" and driving out the colonialists.*

Israel, then, is not just a foreign encroachment upon Arab land but a military beachhead from which the forces of imperialism will attempt to move out to a conquest of the entire Middle East. Unfortunately, the strategic facts of life of Middle-East warfare have given an appearance of truth to the Arab conviction that Israel is expansionist by nature. A tiny country hemmed in against the sea, at points narrower in width than the range of its enemy's mortars, cannot hope to survive an attack without striking into enemy territory, and so in 1948-49, and far more spectacularly in 1967, Israel ended up after the fighting with expanded borders. These historical circumstances, however, are only a point of departure, for Israel's supposed expansionism has encouraged the most uninhibited exercise of the Arab habit of confusing facts with lies. Projected fears turn into "historical" realities and thus the Arabs come to think and act in a strange world of distorted half-lights in which fantasy is more substantial than verifiable fact.

For the Arabs, Israeli expansionism is a matter not of mere inference but of declared Zionist policy. Here, for example, is a statement allegedly made by Ben Gurion at the end of hostilities in 1949, "quoted" not in an Arab propaganda pamphlet but in *The Egyptian Journal of Political Science,* an ostensibly scholarly journal:

> We have returned our swords to their scabbards only as a temporary measure. We shall unsheathe them when liberty in this land is endangered and when the vision of the Prophets and the Torah will be fulfilled, for then the entire Jewish people will return to settle in the lands of our forefathers stretching out from the Euphrates in the east to the Nile in the west.

Even as forgery, this is pretty poor stuff: whatever the defects of Ben Gurion's rhetoric, the business of sheathing and unsheathing swords is just a little too much. But the troubling point is

* For the historical development of this relation between Arab opposition to Israel and to the West, see Amos Perlmutter, "Sources of Instability in the Middle East," *Orbis,* September 1968.

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that the statement, cited by a supposedly scholarly authority, is accepted by its readers and has precisely the same effect on them as though it really had been made by Ben Gurion. The little flourish about the Euphrates and the Nile has a certain inevitability because Arabs everywhere believe this is the stated Zionist program. According to one frequently repeated story, there is a large map in the Knesset building in Jerusalem showing most of the Middle East as *Israel irredenta:* under it is printed the biblical phrase, "From the Nile to the Euphrates." Another version has it that this phrase is inscribed on the facade of the new Knesset building. When captured Egyptian officers were taken into the Knesset in 1956 to see that there was no such map, they decided that the Israelis had merely hidden it. In 1967, another batch of Egyptian prisoners were taken to Jerusalem to be shown that there was no menacing inscription on the Knesset building; they undoubtedly concluded that the map was nevertheless hidden somewhere inside.

What has made such visions of an Israel insatiable for conquest especially credible to Arabs is the dissemination among them of a demonological image of the Jew. As Yehoshafat Harkabi demonstrates, Arab propagandists are able to draw on many traditional Islamic stereotypes of the Jew as treacherous, conniving, racially inferior, but what is really staggering is the degree to which Arabs have taken over directly from the Nazis the most vicious anti-Semitic propaganda, often merely issuing it in Arabic translation without substantial alteration. Such materials are used, moreover, not only by rabble-rousers and nationalists of the lunatic fringe, but by high-ranking officials, government information services, reputable political commentators, educators (who have introduced these materials into the schools). One is faced with the unsettling conclusion that in many Arab countries the difference between lunatic fringe and official opinion, at least on the matter of Israel, is negligible.

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion has been translated into Arabic seven different times; Nasser himself has spoken admiringly of it, and it would appear that it is widely accepted in the Arab world as a valid historical document. In the baleful light of the *Protocols,* as Harkabi shows, the Arab confrontation with Israel takes on a new dramatic significance. The Arabs have to face not merely Israel but, in a phrase recurrently used, "Israel and all that stands behind it." The satanic Jewish plan, as we know from the *Protocols,* is nothing less than world conquest, and Israel is now clearly the main jumping-off point for this plan. World wars are engineered by the Jews in order to implement their scheme of domination. After World War I, they obtained the Balfour Declaration; after World War II, they won the State; with World War III, they will take over the world. Most of the ills of modern civilization are attributable to the vast Jewish scheme to weaken the enemy before subjugating him. Thus, according to various Arab writers, the Jews are responsible for capitalism, Communism, the erosion of traditional faith and values; for existentialism, sociology (a particularly low blow), the spread of sexual promiscuity, the existence of a worldwide network of whorehouses. In the face of such an immense and insidious conspiracy, it is small wonder that the Arabs have been defeated three times by the Israelis. The Arabs, however, will bravely persist in their struggle, which is after all a struggle of cosmic dimensions, the forces of good confronting the forces of evil at the geographic center of their nefarious plan of conquest.

THIS, I WOULD suggest, is the ultimate and most ominous asymmetry of the Israeli-Arab conflict. The Israelis may have often been guilty of a lack of moral imagination *vis-à-vis* the Arabs, but they have always seen them as men of flesh and blood living in real national entities, with a language, a culture, and political institutions, that could be studied, known, confronted in practical ways. For the Arabs, on the other hand, the real contours of the Jewish state and its citizens long ago dissolved in a roiling cloud of poisonous myth. The Arabs—or at the very least the Arab intelligentsia—are more completely the captives of a collective myth than any people since the Germans under Hitler, and it finally is this that makes political compromise with Israel unthinkable to them. For the Arabs, it is perfectly natural that government publications should circulate the old Christian libel that Jews make ritual use of the blood of Gentile children; it is not even surprising that Arab spokesmen should repeatedly support the Final Solution as a necessary act of self-defense by the German people, standing as the champions of mankind against the implacable Jewish enemy. Since all this may still have an air of unreality for Western readers, let me offer just one sample, a paragraph from an open letter to Eichmann that appeared in the Jordanian English-language *Jerusalem Times* on April 24, 1961 (and we might recall that all of us are in the habit of thinking of Jordan as the most "moderate" of the Arab states):

> Listen, Eichmann, you are accused of killing six million of their race. It is not our purpose to argue whether this is true or not; but we should like to say that if you succeeded in finishing off six million and the remaining six million have caused destruction and suffering to the Arabs, driving them from their homes, what might have been the result if the six million who were destroyed had been allowed to live?

The important point to recognize in all this is that the Palestine problem has become the focus for a collective psychopathology among Arabs,

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enveloping the most enlightened and sophisticated of their intellectuals as well as their ranting nationalist and religious demagogues. Arab doctrine on Israel and the Jews, steadily inculcated for two decades, cannot be the basis for any politically workable policy but is only, to borrow Norman Cohn's telling phrase, a "warrant for genocide." The practical issue of this whole ideology is succinctly summarized by Harkabi: "In the face of a demand for annihilation there is no possibility of compromise, for there is no such thing as partial annihilation."

What we have been dealing with, to be sure, is not direct proof of the secret intentions or actual feelings of the Arabs but only the record of their public statements, and one must always allow for the possibility that in certain circumstances they may be prepared to act more reasonably than they talk. Given the gap, moreover, between the shapers of opinion and the illiterate masses, it is hard to guess how deeply or widely these attitudes have taken root in popular feeling, although Harkabi and others offer some evidence that hatred of Israel is by now a genuine passion of the Arab populace. In any case, the saturation of a culture by a literature and ideology of hate cannot be lightly dismissed. The Middle-East conflict is a very real conflict of opposing national interests over territory. By the nature of the dispute, peaceful solution is difficult but possible; after the conflict has been swollen and distorted by twenty years of Arab propaganda, no peaceful solution is possible so long as the Arabs continue to act in consistency with their own ideology. On this question of the relation between ideology and action, I would again like to quote Harkabi, because it seems to me that his formulation is particularly judicious:

> The value of the ideology is that it reflects the feelings and aspirations of the Arabs. If it doesn't tell us what they will do, it does describe what they would like for themselves. It is a summary of the goals beckoning from afar, which, even if they do not determine the way, at least give it a general direction. If ideology does not embody policy, it is an expression of the matrix of policy, of a metapolitics; it is the background of consciousness and feeling upon which policy is woven.

With the particular background of consciousness and feeling that Arabs have developed, one must face some sobering conclusions about the alternatives open to Israel. For the foreseeable future, it would seem that Israel's security will have to depend upon the superiority of its armed forces and on whatever deterrent value that may have in Arab eyes. Israel obviously cannot afford to give up anything without mutual concessions from the Arabs, and, above all, it can never agree to an arrangement which would put it back in a position of serious tactical vulnerability to Arab attack. In view of the unbending hostility of the Arab position, this is not a "hard" line (and, indeed, there is scarcely any debate about this much in Israel) but merely the minimal necessary precautions Israel must take to prevent its own destruction. A serious reconciliation between the two sides can take place only after significant inner changes in Arab politics and ideology, and such changes may be, I fear, a long time in coming.

Careful scrutiny of the Arab posture offers nothing encouraging to an Israeli view, only one somewhat bitter reassurance: in cold military terms, the result of the Arabs' addiction to a mythic vision of the conflict is to cripple their effectiveness as adversaries. On the one hand, they secretly or openly fear the Zionists as satanic beings with unguessed powers of darkness working behind them. The more frequent emphasis, on the other hand, of an ideology that dehumanizes the Jews is to imagine them as subhuman. Israel, according to reiterated Arab doctrine, is not even a state but a "pseudo-state," a "bandit state," about to collapse under its own corrupt weight, ridden by that savage factionalism which is a racial attribute of the Jews. The stereotype of the Jew as it appears in Arab propaganda is straight out of *Der Stürmer*: a recurrent cartoon motif shows a sallow, puny, hook-nosed creature being crushed like vermin under the boot of an enormous Arab soldier. This may be flattering to the Arab self-image, but it hardly seems the best way to prepare realistically for a confrontation with what is probably the toughest, best-trained, most brilliantly commanded army in the world. Both Arabs and Israelis, then, are caught in the vicious circle of Arab ideology. For the Israelis, it precludes peace, compelling them to continue their national existence in a stage of siege. For the Arabs, it precludes the very victory they seek, condemns them to a mental hell of national humiliations that can only grow in number as they are driven onward in a self-defeating policy by the rage of their frustration.

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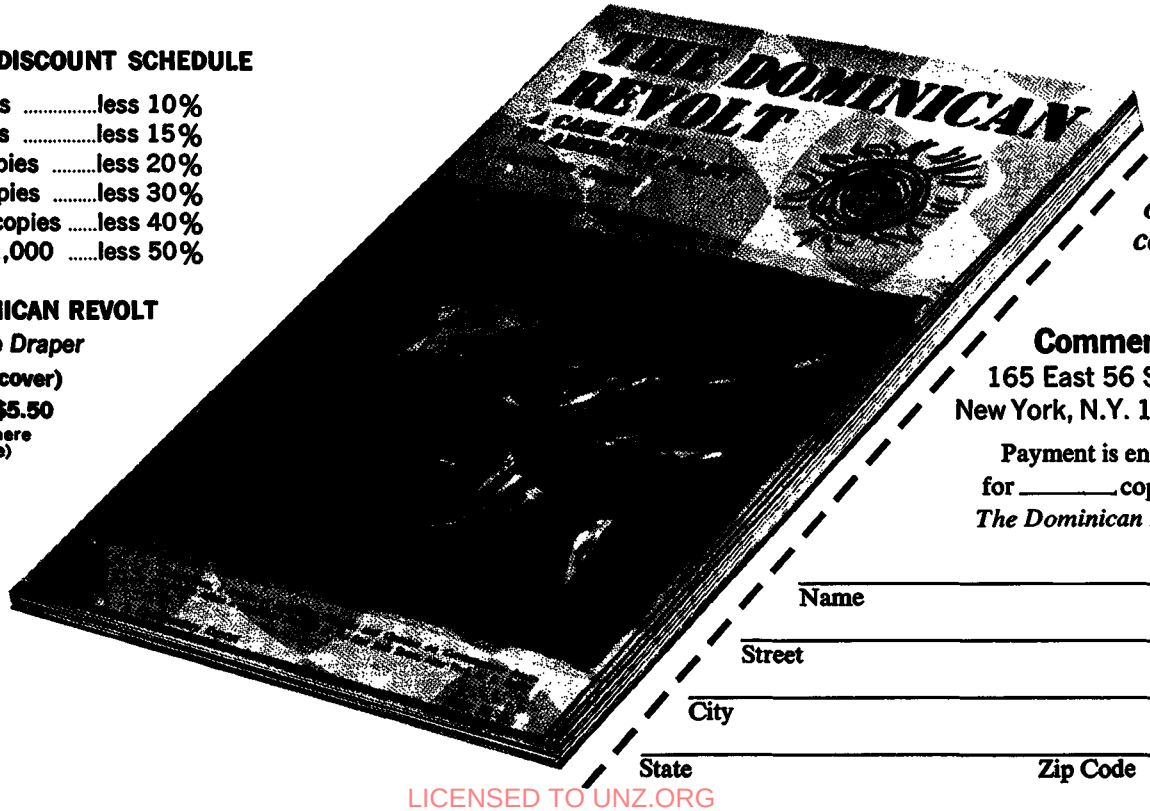

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The Fiction Machine

John Thompson

The Pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat:
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?
—Wordsworth, "Ode: Intimations of Immortality"

THOUGHTS THAT lie too deep for tears, or vice versa: such are the meditations or the fitful depressions that come from a year of reading more fiction than can be good for anyone. It is a weakness caused by simultaneous deficiencies as of that which should nourish and of that which should digest.

The professional critic of the theater, of film, of music, of painting, as well as the critic of literature, each of them suffers a disability that makes him in some ways the worst possible judge of his subject. Artists are right when they say they do not create their works for critics, just as they do not create them for students. Bowing before some assignment in school, before some work of art he has to try to "understand," the student is a captive who can save himself from imminent execution only by producing on demand a mixture of flattery and confession before an idol whose very presence there is meant to show him that he belongs on his knees. But even this salvation, he knows, will be sourly compromised. In this ordeal of worship, one baptism is not enough. The teacher, being a teacher, is obliged to tell him that he has not really understood. And then comes another assignment. Whatever it is that art hopes to do, can it do it in those circumstances?

The critic is seldom allowed merely this obeisance and confession to fulfill his assignment. Even if he loves the work of art, even if he is moved by it—inevitably he will be moved less and less in his satiety—he must keep his eyes open. He will be disappointed in himself if he is not able to tell the artist not only what the artist has done but something of what the artist might have done if only he had possessed those all-seeing eyes of the critic. As he reads or looks or listens, the critic will be impatient to discover things he can talk about, connections and discrepancies, aspects of his own theories and preoccupations. The work of art before all else must give him something to say. To be sure, this is a stern test for art. But is it really a test of what art hopes to do?

NEVERTHELESS, something besides the critic's surfeit or the critic's insufficiency troubles me. Thinking of the scores of books of fiction of the past year, of American fiction of the past twenty years, the old ghosts rise once more: Hemingway and Faulkner. These are names to make living novelists curl their lips, and rightly so, at those who throw them out again and again like unbeatable trumps no matter what new hand is played. Yet, let us glance back at them anyway. I would like to deal now not in the finer discriminations but in generalities, not in names but in tendencies and impressions—any of which, of course, may be given the lie by some exception you can readily call to mind.

So large and general and obvious is what I want to speak of first that there is no name for it. Subject—plot—experience—no, that is not it, exactly. Hemingway and Faulkner (I can see the lips curling) wrote novels of grand adventure. In their day, it did not always seem so, for theirs were not conventional adventure stories as they had been written before. Their heroes were anti-heroes, disillusioned men of the 20's and 30's, living in times of loss and failure, failure of Europe, failure of the old South. But their heroes, and their villains, took action. They went to war, to the First World War, to the Civil War, to the Spanish Civil War. They got mixed up with bootleggers and gangsters; they flew airplanes, sailed boats, fought bulls, got into jail, went into the wilds of Mississippi or Africa and fired rifles at large dangerous animals. They engaged in fist fights. They fell in love and the women they loved were beautiful.

Please do not, at this point, tell me that they were creating myths of the latent homosexuality implicit in the American inability to imagine a mature sexual relation with a real woman, and that they expressed this in masculine violence. I believe it too, alas. But if this was what they were doing "really," they were also really writing stories of grand and dangerous adventures in exotic locales or exotic times of the past. True, Robert Jordan (that unreal man) was said to have been, in his unreal past, a college professor; but his agon was not with the chairman of the Spanish department.

It is not my preposterous intention to scold American novelists for being college professors as so many of them are, nor even to scold them for writing about college professors as so many of them do. One thing we can be absolutely certain of is that it is always wrong to scold the artists of any time for what we take to be the shortcomings of art in their period. Artists imagine and record, they record fevers and they record chills, but they do not produce them. Except in their audiences, and then as audiences only, not as doers in the world. Did Faulkner cause anyone to enlist in the Civil War or in Civil Rights?

If you have already responded by thinking how Hemingway and Faulkner imagined, or in the case of Hemingway acted out as well, romantic and gothic extravaganzas of aggression and fear of a kind already all but out of date in their own day and certainly out of date now, then I agree. Hemingway got

JOHN THOMPSON *reviewed James Cozzens's new novel,* Morning, Noon and Night, *in our September issue.*

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to Africa just barely in time: Saul Bellow knew there was no point in really going to Africa, which is nothing but a state of mind, an imaginary arena for the projection of psychological melodramas. He sent his Henderson to a dream Africa. Norman Mailer knew that the day was long gone when a hunting story could advance with one foot in observed reality while the other splashed around in the great pool of symbolism. His bear hunt in *Why Are We in Vietnam?*, whatever else it may be, and this is a puzzling book, is deliberately contrived in parody out of famous scenes from the hunting tales of Hemingway and Faulkner, and its climax, in a narrowly averted homosexual act, may well have come not even from the secondary sources of these novelists but from their tertiary interpreter, Leslie A. Fiedler.

Adventures, even large moral adventures, are reserved now for the cheap fodder like *Airport* or *Vanished* or *Testimony of Two Men* that fills all the bins of the bestseller list when something else like *Herzog* or *The Group* does not fall into it as if by accident. (*Nat Turner* is an exception, with its exotic and melodramatic plot.)

In fiction that has any aspirations to artistic excellence, dramatic adventures are now almost always limited to overt fantasy. The professors now write, they suppose, under the bright star of Nathanael West. With unleashed imaginations they hurl themselves into a vacuum of crime and torture and magic, hoping thus, I suppose, to tap the old sources of our fictive pleasures. Beneath all the old fiction, we now know, lay only dreams; so why not move directly into the dream and dispense with those attempts to present real guns and real lions and real enemies? Dreams are lovely things to interpret. But my dreams seem to me, when I dream them or insofar as I can recall them, quite real without any interpretation at all. Their strange insequences of shifting scenes and persons are loaded with, surrounded by, all the emotions I have ever felt. Your dreams, I am afraid, are poor bare things when you tell them to me. At bottom we share the same dream, no doubt. I am not, though, inside your dream, it does not particularly attract me, and I feel nothing for it. If you go on and produce a world of associations for its symbols, I will still only be interested in being able to say at the end, "You imagined your mother, that big bear, was going to eat you," or something like that. I feel nothing. I am not in your dream. I can enter it directly with no baggage of feeling; but if I am to bring my feelings I must go the long way round through the world.

I am, of course, in a world that is at least something like yours. And we can both live for a while together in worlds you might convince me were real. I would like to live in a world somewhat more exciting than the one I inhabit, where events were larger and clearer and had more immediate consequences, where cause and effect and good and bad seemed as important as they did in my childhood, or as they do, quite unexplained, in my dreams. Such worlds were once available for fiction, and we could pass there through other men's dreams. Now these ways have gone flimsy on us, we must move across their surface very rapidly if we are not to break through into their mere meanings. This is not your fault nor is it mine. I would gladly join Susan Sontag in asking that we let up on our interpretations, or that we find something that cannot be so easily interpreted, something that moves too swiftly, too lightly, for glosses, something that keeps us otherwise entranced so that we do not fall into that realm of the understood, once so exhilarating and now so often only depressing. But it is too late.

It is too late because we know the tricks. All those extraordinary devices of reticence and indirection that Hemingway once used precisely to avoid generalization, to force us to see and feel something rather than to make statements about it, these could not surprise us anymore, or puzzle us as once they did. The idle chatter of two waiters about an old man in a foreign café was once—if you can recover for a moment the lost innocence or ignorance that I suppose we all used to have—compelling and ominous but also seemed to be nonsensical. Now "A Clean Well Lighted Place" is surely to everyone only a statement of the necessity for personal control in the absence of supernatural sanctions, just an example of premature existentialism. . . . Quentin Compson's turmoil, Benjy's incoherence, once was as confusing and as real as life itself, only maybe more compelling. Now we have been given diagrams of the time shifts, and charts of all the internal allusions. It used to make you feel as crazy as Quentin to read this! Of course we should have been given these clarities, we cannot be obscurantists. But there hath passed away, along with our unable and uninstructed delusions, some bit of glory from the earth.

When James Joyce discovered and made explicit in *Dubliners* the painstaking mosaic method of Flaubert in point of view, in an illusion of reality established by exact corroborative detail, in feelings adjusted by the mingling of the author's and the character's language in unrelentingly precise phrases, in such exact correspondences between details of established evoked reality and the subtle psychologies of the characters as, so Allen Tate tells us, the whirring of old Binet's lathe that calls Emma Bovary like a voice of fury to jump from her window—when Joyce found all this, he found something else too. He found that underneath this surface technique of fiction there lay another secret, the presence of great simple archetypal human experiences. These were what the carefully detailed and phrased surface could be made to elicit. In *Ulysses* he brought these secret themes, like the secrets of the narrative techniques, out in the open. There they were for all to see—as the writers, to be sure, had been seeing them, gradually, before him. But now, if fiction were to be read at all, these things had to be seen, they couldn't be missed, they forced themselves upon every beholder. And fiction, for a generation, burst forth in a whole sky full of marvelous pyrotechnics. Just so, some years before that, Cézanne had made explicit

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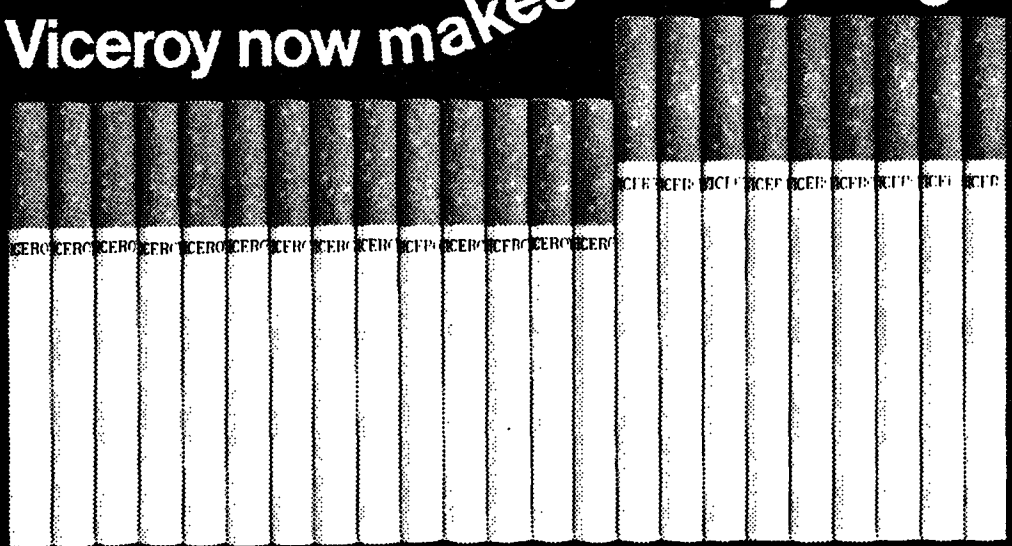

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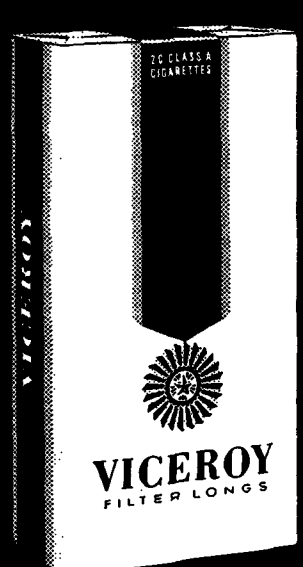

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the technique of using color and form on a flat surface—had made it so explicit that it was impossible to look at a painting without seeing these techniques of the surface. You saw those or you saw nothing. Almost immediately like an explosion, and then a chain of explosions, came the greatest period of painting in Western history, greater perhaps, certainly a more complete explosion, than that which followed the revelations of Giotto. It lasted, say, for two generations. And then? And now? We may have something else but it is not painting.

"FAR FROM suffering a dearth of good or promising writers," say the editors of a very large new anthology of current fiction,* "America now probably has more of them than any other land in any other time." There follows a list of about three hundred such writers. *Three hundred!* And as the editors say, anyone who reads much fiction could doubtless add to the list. Why, then, they ask, is it constantly being said that fiction is in decline—as it undoubtedly is declining in the market reality of magazines and in book publishing. Why do people keep saying that the novel is dead? Despite the decline in prestige and consumption, they say, fiction still can tell us more about American life today than can the social sciences or other forms of "non-fiction." On the whole this is indeed a representative collection of stories and pieces of novels, and it offers a fair ground for the discussion of that question the editors argue, a question that doesn't seem to me a particularly interesting one. We learn, in these general terms and according to their organization by topics, that some of us live ALONE, in isolation, unable to communicate; IN FAMILIES, which are breaking down due to urbanization and mobility; IN COMMUNITIES, which aren't what they used to be either; AT WORK—work is meaningless today; IN RELIGION—JEWISH CONFLICTS IN CULTURE ASSIMILATION; IN RACE—THE VISIBLE NEGRO; IN CLASS—MINUTE DISTINCTIONS IN THE MIDDLE; and then in some less definable ways, OVERVIEWS, and STRATAGEMS. If this is the way we live, it is indeed depressing. The glory and the dream are vanished quite out of sight.

It would be hard to say whether those ALONE or those IN FAMILIES or those IN COMMUNITIES are in worse case. A more miserable population of the weak-backed and weak-minded I doubt you have ever seen. In comparison the dead souls that Tchitchikov traded with in late Tsarist Russia or the dying souls the Sportsman sketched there were enjoying lively times in Arcadia. Only the Jews and the Negroes, in their CONFLICTS IN CULTURAL ASSIMILATION and in becoming VISIBLE, seem to have any pep or any feelings or even any intentions worth mentioning. However, this subject is not very interesting either. For in this gallery of submediocrity—the writer's revenge on his given, his enforced, subject, "the common man"?— there is relief only in what some of the writers make of this, in their writing, not in their subject. When they move fast, when there is a lot of fancy footwork and much presence of the writer himself, as in those two great stories, Norman Mailer's "The Man Who Studied Yoga" and Peter Taylor's "Heads of Houses," the writer and with him the reader is presented with a sort of adventure, an exhilaration proceeding from virtuosity, from the very exercise of verbal skill and lordly manipulation and beautifully arbitrary concoctions of symmetry out of this sordid stuff.

But where the writer is only clumping flatfooted in his heavy work-shoes toward some dreary moral, as in the stories by Herbert Gold or Arthur Miller or Harvey Swados, the performance is as miserable and depressing as the life described or the humdrum maxims pressed upon us for knowledge at the end. Oh, there are some good things not well-known, too: "The Pale Virgins Shrouded in Snow," by John Heffron Porter; "The Classless Society," by Elizabeth Hardwick; "The Nickel Misery of George Washington Carver Brown," by Ivan Gold: these also highly contrived virtuoso pieces. But there is the usual dreary exposition of how forlorn old middle-class ladies are, and of how young men go surrealistically berserk because they are alienated and have nothing better to do. If one took out perhaps sixteen good things—this is a lot of good things for one anthology, though—and ran the other forty stories through a food mill, you would have something like processed cheese, and the authors are cramming this down the throats of their dull American heroes and heroines, meanwhile saying, "Here is what you stupid people like to eat." This is the writer's revenge for never having been to shoot a lion in Africa.

WHAT I HAVE proposed, then, is a model, a little structure neither original nor foolproof, and certainly full of loopholes, but which anyone can test. In Olden Times, writers told stories and readers read them, to find out what would happen. The readers wished or feared that they were like the people in these stories, they suffered and thrilled and triumphed or lost with them. If the readers talked about the stories at all, it was usually to say whether or not the stories were morally improving by the higher standards of the day. As the subjects of the stories became less enthralling in themselves—as the heroes and heroines became like one's self, a middling sort, noble neither by birth nor by action, and not even very naughty—then the writers found they had to work hard at such tricks as would engage first their own interest and then the interest of their readers. (This part of the machine has to have a system of feedback; in fact, it's hard to tell which operation comes first here. Cézanne abandoned interesting subjects so that he, and the viewer, would have to concentrate on his technique and not instead get all worked up about a prancing equestrian Bedouin or a pair of naked breasts.) This separation of technique from subject matter was very exciting to artists, and they all started cranking the machine like mad, producing marvelous results all over the place. Whereupon another ele-

* *How We Live: Contemporary Life in Contemporary Fiction.* Edited by Penney Chapin Hills and L. Rust Hills. Macmillan, 1,008 pp. $12.50.

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ment showed up in the works, as they had somehow suspected it would. This was the element of the Unspeakable.

Separating the adventures of the adventurous from the everyday misadventures of the timid, and depicting these misadventures with the gloriously precise new techniques, the writers found that the mighty themes which had seemed to be so inextricably a part of the mighty adventures of old were somehow going through the machine along with the little least things of life. The occasions of life could get littler and littler. At last they could be directly anatomical. A few inches of unexercised flesh belonging to a middle-aged Jew in Dublin can be no less a thing than Odysseus's mighty bow unstrung for years: Bloom and Stephen urinating by the back fence are identical with Odysseus and Telemachus arming themselves in the great hall at Ithaca for slaughter. It was plain to see, then, that the mighty bow itself was only the imagination's glorying in those few inches of flesh. It was all only an idea anyway.

With the distracting hurly-burly of the heroes separated out, leaving the various tricks of notation which make up the techniques of the art of fiction, and then with these tricks clearly recognized, finally there was this other residue. This was the Unspeakable, the Idea. This too was refined at last and could be added to taste. It was like our modern way of grinding flour, which removes the nutrients of the grain and leaves us free to replace some of them, if we wish, with chemical products simulating them in certain ways.

So NOW we know. You can buy one of these machines today in any Writer's Workshop. Which is not to say that some people don't run them better than others, much better—or that there are not those who still struggle on without these modern devices even if their products, while still popular—*Airport, Vanished, Testimony of Two Men*—are hopelessly flat and stale. Nor is this to say that we have given up entirely our addiction to, our genuine dependence on, the fictive art in one guise or another, even in that of non-fiction. We do not have much of anything else in this line. But is it really the same?

Music Criticism Today

B. H. Haggin

A FEW YEARS AGO, when I published a collection of my writing on music, an English reviewer of the book mentioned my "undisguised loathing" for some of the writings of other critics. I hadn't realized it was that apparent; but since it is, I may as well admit it and explain it. The explanation is that I care intensely about music, and therefore about what is done to it, not only by performers but by critics. Bernard Shaw once wrote about the people who pointed to the evidence of strong personal feeling in his concert reviews as though this were a misdemeanor, and pointed out that the true critic is a man for whom good or bad art *is* a personal matter, and who becomes a personal enemy on the provocation of a bad performance. I feel as Shaw did about the damage done to music by a bad performance; and I feel just as strongly about the damage done to it by a piece of bad criticism—the damage first to the reader in giving him wrong ideas about the music or the performance, and then in this way to the composer and the performer. As I see it, such damage is done by most of what is written about music in newspapers from the New York *Times* down, in magazines ranging from *Harper's*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, and the *New Yorker* to *Esquire*, in the news weeklies, and in the magazines devoted to records. And of what I see, I propose to give some examples.

The critic's operation is performed with a specific equipment for the purpose—the specific gifts of perception and taste which enable him to hear what is placed before him and to evaluate it. And most criticism of music is done by people who write as though they have these gifts, but who actually do not have them. They don't have the taste with which to evaluate correctly what they hear; they don't have even the perception with which to hear it correctly. And my first examples are concerned with this lack of mere perception—perception of what I think may be considered simple fact: the fact, say, that one voice is ravishing to the ear, and another is unpleasant; or that one voice is steady, and another is afflicted with tremolo; or that one singer's—or one pianist's—phrasing is simple, and another's is fussy.

Thus Angel issues a new recorded performance of Mozart's *Così Fan Tutte*; and right at the start, in the opening trio, one is struck by the unpleasant and straining tenor voice of Alfredo Kraus, as against the ear-ravishing and easily flowing voice of Leopold Simoneau in the earlier Angel performance, and by the unattractive bass of Walter Berry in the new performance, as against the superb voice of Sesto Bruscantini in the earlier one. But Roland Gelatt of *High Fidelity*, reviewing the new performance in the *Reporter*, writes that Berry is a "decided improvement" over Bruscantini, and Kraus is up to the standard of Simoneau. And the result is damage to the readers who are persuaded to acquire this new performance with poorer voices, and to think these voices are good.

NOR IS this deficiency in mere perception exhibited only by writers for record magazines. Harold Schonberg reports in the *Times* on two recorded performances of a Schubert sonata which are strikingly dissimilar: one by Friedrich Wührer, which is simple, straightforward, and lifeless; the other by Wilhelm Kempff, in which he keeps fussing with tempo and phrasing. And he writes that "Kempff and Wührer are pianists very much in the same style. Both exhibit the Teutonic style of playing; both work in broad, massive

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B. H. HAGGIN's *most recent works are* The New Listener's Companion and Record Guide *and* The Toscanini Musicians Knew *(Horizon). The present essay is an adaptation of Mr. Haggin's opening statement at a session of the "Prospects of Criticism" series held last year at the Poetry Center of the YMHA in New York.*

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strokes"—which actually neither of them does. And again the result is damage to the readers who are persuaded to acquire one or the other of these poor performances and to hear it as something it isn't. (Since Schonberg's preoccupation as a reviewer is with this placing of the pianist or singer or conductor in such nonexistent "styles," "traditions," and "schools," his readers learn also of the "Austro-German tradition" in conducting exemplified in the completely dissimilar practice of Furtwängler, Klemperer, and von Karajan; and of Fischer-Dieskau's singing of *Lieder* being "of the Elena Gerhardt school," when in fact it offers the antithesis of Gerhardt's.)

But it isn't only people like Gelatt and Schonberg. Winthrop Sargeant of the *New Yorker* is a professional musician who played in the New York Philharmonic with Toscanini, and whom one would expect to be able to hear that Patricia Brooks, in the New York City Opera's *La Traviata,* chews up the music in explosions of tremulous vocal sound, but who writes that her singing, done with a voice that is "pure and well-produced," is that of the greatest Violetta he has ever heard—which is damaging to the readers whom it persuades to attend a performance of *La Traviata* with her bad singing and to think it is good singing. So again at a concert performance of Gluck's *Orfeo,* where one would expect Sargeant to be able to hear that Elisabeth Schwarzkopf's phrasing of recitative is unbearably mannered and affected, and that in the arias she produces not a sustained melodic line but explosions of shrill sound —instead of which he writes that Schwarzkopf "is perhaps the most sophisticated of living sopranos" and that "a more stylish and appropriate Euridice would be hard to imagine." And so again when Sargeant hears a Serkin performance of Beethoven—the frenetic belaboring of music and piano—and reports its "scholarly meticulousness"; or he hears Barenboim's undisciplined playing in Beethoven's *Appassionata*—the expressive crescendos that are too violent, the lingering retardations that are too great, the pauses that are too long, the *Andante con moto* theme of the variation movement that is made excessively slow, the first variation that is too fast after the slow theme, the feathery playing that is ludicrously unsuitable in the impassioned finale—and writes about the "extraordinary musical taste and intelligence," the "fine sense of repose," the "infallible sense of form," the "use of *rubato* in precisely the right way" that make Barenboim "one of the world's important artists of the keyboard."

BUT MOST astounding are the instances involving conductors. For Sargeant, as I said earlier, played in the New York Philharmonic with Toscanini, and came to know the plastic shaping of the music, the sensitive phrasing and rhythm, the grace that were characteristic of Toscanini's performances; and one would expect him to recognize that the stiff, insensitive, hard-driven, graceless performances of Szell today are as unlike Toscanini's as any performances could be; instead of which he writes on one occasion that "Szell's performances are of all contemporary ones the most apt to resemble Toscanini's," and on another occasion credits Szell with "exquisite taste, a grasp of a vast variety of musical styles, and a profound comprehension of form, climax and what the Germans call *Aufbau*"—all of which are reminiscent of Toscanini and make Szell "more like this fabulous predecessor of his than any other conductor who has been heard here in recent years." This is damaging to the readers who not only are persuaded to listen to Szell's bad performances and think they are good, but are given the idea that such stiff, graceless performances were what Toscanini produced.

And they are given this false idea of Toscanini's performances explicitly when Sargeant, describing the excellences of Zubin Mehta's *Aida,* cites in particular its lack of rigidity, which one would expect him to consider a point of resemblance to Toscanini, but which instead demonstrates to Sargeant that Mehta is refreshingly unlike the other younger conductors of today who imitate Toscanini's "adherence to rigid and speedy tempo." This reveals an astounding failure to hear the actual lack of rigidity that is strikingly evident not only in Toscanini's recorded *Aida* but in all his performances—and not only in the expansive, flexibly paced performances of the Philharmonic years which Sargeant himself played in,* but in the performances of the later NBC years that got to be simpler and faster but even then didn't lose the plasticity and grace that were characteristic of his operation.

But it isn't only in performance that Sargeant exhibits this deficiency in mere perception; it is also in music. A few years ago Stravinsky created a sensation in one of his books of conversation with Robert Craft by attacking the music critics as a group, and two critics—Sargeant and Paul Henry Lang—in particular. His point about the group was that they were incompetent because they didn't know how music was written; his specific point about Sargeant was that his giants were Menotti and Giannini, and his dwarfs were Schönberg and Stravinsky. I pointed out at the time that what criticism requires is not the knowledge of the composer, the doer, the insider, but instead the perception, judgment, and taste of the non-doer, the outsider, the listener—which is to say, the professional listener, the critic. And so what made Sargeant contemptible as a critic was not his lack of the composer's knowledge of how to write music, but first of all the deficiencies of taste that Stravinsky had pointed out. On the one hand there was Sargeant's high regard for the worthless, unoriginal pseudo-music—what Shaw called secondhand music—of Menotti, Barber, Giannini, Douglas Moore, and the rest. And on the other hand there was what Sargeant thought of Stravinsky's music—not the recent *Movements* and *Variations,* which one could un-

* For example, the performance of Mozart's *Haffner* Symphony in which Sargeant played in his very first week with Toscanini—with its striking expressive distention of the initial basic tempo in bars 6-9—which can be heard on Victor M-65 and Camden Cal-326.

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derstand Sargeant's finding inaccessible and non-communicative, but the early works that are 20th-century classics—*The Rite of Spring*, for example, to Sargeant's ears "that most famous of all musical conversation pieces" which "is beginning to sound dated." To him these powerfully original works reveal Stravinsky's "lack of creative capacity," which he covers over with his "mastery of the artificialities of music," like orchestration. This is a failure of taste; but there is also again a failure of mere perception.

THAT IS, for Sargeant the only works of Stravinsky that are likely to survive are things like *Pulcinella* and *The Fairy's Kiss*, "because their basic inspiration is not Stravinsky's own. They are . . . Stravinsky orchestrations of music written in the styles of others"—i.e., music in which Stravinsky merely imitates those styles of others. This represents the misunderstanding that has existed from the start about Stravinsky's practice of letting his mind play with the substance and styles of other composers; but it also reveals a remarkable ability not to hear what actually happens in *The Fairy's Kiss*. In this score the fragments Stravinsky uses from Tchaikovsky's piano pieces and songs are reworked by him, and are integrated into contexts of his own invention, some of it in styles that are his reworking, his extension of Tchaikovsky's style; and in the reworking of the Tchaikovsky fragments, as in the Stravinsky contexts, one hears constantly the operation of the Stravinsky mind—just as one hears the operation of the Beethoven mind in his variations on an aria from Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. And Sargeant's description of *The Fairy's Kiss* as a mere Stravinsky imitation of Tchaikovsky is damaging to the readers whom it keeps from experiencing and appreciating what is actually Stravinsky's most masterfully and beautifully wrought, most imaginative and expressive, most affecting score.

Similar deficiencies not only of taste but of mere perception appear in what Sargeant writes about Berlioz—all the old clichés about extravagances, rhetorical flourishes, ingenious and dazzling orchestration covering the poverty of the melodies that for Sargeant are no better than Massenet's and often not even as good. And it is damaging to the readers whom it keeps from discovering that the man Sargeant is talking about is the composer of the exquisitely delicate, wonderfully imagined orchestral magic of *Capulet's Garden* and *Queen Mab* in *Romeo and Juliet*, of the impassioned and heart-piercing melodies of the *Love Scene* in that work, of the delicate and beautiful writing in the first three movements of *Harold in Italy*, the first three movements even of the *Symphonie Fantastique*, of the great melodic writing and marvelous supporting orchestral writing in the songs *Les Nuits d'Eté*.

THE DEFICIENCIES of perception and taste I have been talking about are the deficiencies of equipment that contribute to making most music criticism as bad as it is. But there is another important one that contributes to this result—the deficiency in discipline. I once pointed out that what made Shaw a great music critic was not just his equipment of perception and taste, literary brilliance and wit, but the discipline that caused him to use the literary brilliance and wit strictly in the service of the perception and taste for the critic's task of describing and evaluating accurately the piece of music or the performance before him. And what makes most critics bad is their lack not only of his equipment but of his discipline. They think to themselves not "What can I write that will describe most accurately what I heard?" but instead "What can I write that will impress my readers with my knowledge, my perception, my cleverness, my charm?"—which is likely to produce faulty criticism even when they have knowledge, perception, cleverness, and charm, since the critic's eye that is partly on the effect he wants to make is that much less on the object before him and less likely to see it accurately.

Thus a critic as well equipped as Joseph Kerman, who in the early years of the *Hudson Review* was content at times to write perceptive criticism of particular pieces of music, felt impelled at other times to put on acts of pretentious intellectualism that would impress the readers of a literary quarterly, with results similar to those in his recent book on Beethoven's quartets, in which the music is presented to the reader as, in effect, seen through the distorting lenses of Kerman's pretentious intellectual constructions—the last three Op. 18 quartets, for example, as being made radically different from the first three by certain "disruptive forces," when in fact no such differences are heard by someone who listens to the works with ears unaided by Kerman.

ANOTHER FAIRLY perceptive critic, Michael Steinberg of the Boston *Globe*, has a Ph.D. in music which gives him a great deal of knowledge; and so knowledge-dropping—sometimes relevant, sometimes not—is one of his ways of impressing his readers. Occasionally the knowledge-dropping is part of an operation of one-upmanship in relation to the performer, also to impress readers; and in this operation he sometimes uses the immaturity ploy that is so plausible and so profitable. Thus, reviewing the first Victor record of the extraordinary Guarneri Quartet, whose members are remarkably young, Steinberg writes that the group's immaturity is evident in, among other things, its failure to vary recurrences and repetitions—specifically the repetitions of the minuets after the trios in the Mozart quartets on the record. Here the knowledge Steinberg is dropping—which does apply to the repetition of a section in a keyboard piece by Couperin or a *da capo* aria by Handel, in which variation was customary—does not apply to the minuet in a symphony or quartet by Haydn or Mozart, in which the composer has written out all the notes and the layout of dynamics for their performance, and his direction to repeat it after the trio is a direction to repeat it as he has written it. And the Guarneri Quartet, in doing this, doesn't exhibit immaturity any more than

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Toscanini and the Budapest Quartet did.

On occasion, moreover, the knowledge isn't knowledge at all. Reporting on Boulez's superb performance of Debussy's *Ibéria,* Steinberg singles out two details: the transition from the second movement to the third, in which Boulez, by preserving continuity, passed "a crucial test . . . failed by all other conductors," presumably including Toscanini; and "another notorious problem spot," the accented chord on the downbeat of the very first bar of the work, "usually converted by conductors [again presumably including Toscanini] into a ponderous thump," but not by Boulez, who "gave it as an upbeat," so that "it had force, but with spring rather than weight." The problem spots I was made aware of at Toscanini's rehearsals of the work did not include the two mentioned by Steinberg; listening to Toscanini's performances I never heard the first accented chord made into a ponderous thump, but heard it given the spring Debussy asked for in the direction *dans un rhythme alerte,* nor did I hear a loss of the continuity so characteristic of Toscanini's operation in his handling of the transition from the second movement to the third. And listening to Boulez's performance I didn't hear anything different from Toscanini's at either point (also, watching him I didn't see the first chord on the downbeat given as an upbeat); nor did I hear anything different at the two points when, later, I compared a Boulez performance of *Ibéria* on a tape with the Toscanini performance on the Victor record. Thus Steinberg's statements turn out to be an example of the practice of making imagined points about imagined facts.* It is the normal practice of the man who cannot hear and describe what is actually before him; but it is indulged in also by competent critics—Steinberg being one example, and the most notable being Virgil Thomson, who could produce marvelously perceptive descriptions of what he had heard, but who much of the time preferred to spin out fancy ideas about things made up in his head, of which his inventions and schematizations about Toscanini were some of the outstanding examples.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE of imagined facts was the obituary article on Fritz Reiner in the New York *Herald Tribune,* entitled "A Titan's Last Bow," in which Alan Rich described Reiner as one of the last of what he called the "German-classic" school of conducting, whose earmarks included "probity, self-effacing eloquence, clarity of stick technique," as against what Rich called "the Italian school of Toscanini and De Sabata, or the Franco-Russian school of Koussevitzky, Monteux and, by adoption, Stokowski." If one thinks of the sober, self-effacing conducting of Monteux with its clear stick technique, and then of the contrasting operations of Koussevitzky and Stokowski, and then of the probity, self-effacing eloquence, and clear stick technique of Toscanini, and then of the flamboyance of De Sabata, one realizes that Rich's categorizing was pure invention and nonsense which diminished his readers' understanding of the subject. Moreover, when Rich went on to say that "as an interpreter of the German classics Reiner was above reproach"—his Beethoven *Eroica* being "next to unapproachable"—he was indulging in a flight of obituary rhetoric about imagined Reiner performances, not describing the actual Reiner performances of Beethoven, which, like his performances of other music, did leave him open to reproach for the erratic details of tempo that flawed the musical objects he was producing.

An unforgettable example was Irving Kolodin's statement once about Beecham's ponderous recorded performance of Mozart's exquisite Symphony K.201: "It has been my reaction, after hearing Beecham's more recent performances of this work, that the interpretation he recorded was a transitional one, tending toward the conception he holds today." I knew of no "more recent performances" that Kolodin could have heard, and I was able to ascertain from Beecham, at an accidental meeting, that there had been none. But there may be no more connection with reality in what Kolodin writes about something he does hear; for his criticism is a churning up of turgid verbiage, supposedly for the purpose of informing his readers about the music or performance, but actually for the evident purpose of impressing them with Kolodin—with what he mistakenly thinks is fine writing and impressive ideas, or with the accumulated Kolodin experience and expertise which enables him to perceive in Cantelli's performance of a Mozart Divertimento that "that degree of musical culture and experience which can settle, almost instinctively, on proper tempi and sonorous values for such works as the Mozart, are not yet his"—when in fact it is Kolodin who lacks that degree of musical culture and experience which would enable him to perceive in the performance Cantelli's sure instinct for right tempos and sonorities.

THE LACK of discipline I have been talking about can reach an extreme—and on occasion an ugly and outrageous extreme—which may leave one amazed that such writing is published. But Shaw observed that by some law of nature editors were ignorant about music, and therefore an editor who could recognize bad writing on any other subject would accept from the paper's music critic "bad grammar, bad logic . . . every conceivable blunder and misdemeanor that a journalist can commit." And so it was not surprising that the editors of the *Herald Tribune* published Alan Rich's review of Menotti's opera *The Last Savage,* with its pseudo-boyish gushing about how "all the things that are wrong with it just don't seem to matter," since "there comes a time when high aesthetic principles

*A recent Steinberg review of the Guarneri Quartet's first recordings of Beethoven quartets contained several examples of the superhuman Steinberg ear hearing what to the normal ear is not there to be heard—e.g., the cellist's alleged breaking the opening melodic line of Op. 59 No. 1 with the "gap" Steinberg hears between the A at the end of bar 7 and the G at the beginning of bar 8, when in fact the two notes are connected.

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must be thrown to the winds, and this, dear reader, is the time"; about how the eclectic Menotti has this time "made the whole continent of Europe his oyster. America too, for that matter; didn't we hear Sardula's Act Three aria in *The Sound of Music*? Of course we did. But how seductive it all is! . . . Only a churl could cavil at such treasures, hollow as they may be"; and about the production that is "gorgeous beyond dreams," the cast that is "glorious," the orchestra that is "right on its tippy-twinkletoes."

Nor was it surprising that the *Herald Tribune* editors earlier accepted Paul Henry Lang's deficiencies of perception and taste and his atrocious writing; but what *was* amazing was their toleration of the outrageous personal offensiveness Lang exhibited repeatedly in his references to Stravinsky's collaboration with Robert Craft—in particular his repeated contention that in their published volumes of conversations Stravinsky was a mere ventriloquist's dummy speaking what a sinister Craft, with his loaded questions, got him to speak; his statement that the collaboration had reached the point where "Mr. Stravinsky should use the business designation 'A Division of Craft Products Inc.'"; and the later statement that carried this offensiveness to the point of referring to Stravinsky's "amanuensis, librettist, and *valet de chambre*, Robert Craft."

BUT IT WASN'T only the *Herald Tribune* editors who amazed one in this way. The editors of the *Times* may have been incapable of recognizing Harold Schonberg's appalling deficiencies as a critic, the appalling quality of his prose ("Every now and then Mr. Richter played a phrase in the most ravishing manner possible. Then he would turn around and play without apparent liaison with the previous phrase."), and on one occasion his inadequacy as a mere reporter when he described the eccentricities of tempo in Glenn Gould's performance of Brahms's D-minor Concerto without placing them in their context of the impressive operation of Gould's powers, the beautiful playing he did, even in that eccentric performance. But it was amazing that the editors of a paper as concerned with propriety and decorum as the *Times* should have tolerated a performance by Schonberg as unprecedented in its ostentatious vulgarity and offensiveness as Gould's had been in its slow tempos. Schonberg professed to be writing about the performance to a friend named Ossip: "Such goings-on at the New York Philharmonic concert yesterday afternoon! I tell you, Ossip, like you never saw. . . . First the conductor comes out to read a speech. He says that he doesn't like the way the pianist will play the concerto. I mean this, Ossip. Glenn Gould is waiting in the wings to play Brahms, and has to listen to Leonard Bernstein saying that this was a Brahms he never dreamed of. He washes his hands of it. . . . So then the Gould boy comes out, and you know what, Ossip? Now I understand. I mean, a conductor has to protect himself. You know what? The Gould boy played the Brahms D minor Concerto slower than the way we used to practice it. (And between you, me, and the corner lamppost, Ossip, maybe the reason he plays it so slow is maybe his technique is not so good.)" And much more of same.

ONE LAST POINT. I've been talking about the damage done by bad criticism to the reader in giving him incorrect ideas about good and bad in music and performance; and I said at the beginning that through these incorrect ideas damage was done also to the composer and the performer. Not to Stravinsky; but to some extent to Berlioz, whose music some people are still kept from appreciating by writing like Sargeant's and Lang's. And certainly to Mussorgsky, whose own *Boris Godunov* is replaced everywhere today by Rimsky-Korsakov's falsification, because of the critics' failure to recognize themselves and to proclaim to the public that Mussorgsky's *Boris* is the work of an extraordinary genius, not of a clumsy dilettante in need of Rimsky's assistance, and that it is as illegitimate for an opera company to produce his *Boris* rewritten by Rimsky as it would be for a museum to exhibit an El Greco repainted by Norman Rockwell.

As for the performer, the career of an established celebrity like Glenn Gould couldn't be damaged by Schonberg's arrogant sneering; nor will the career of another such celebrity, Vladimir Ashkenazy, be affected by Schonberg's nonsense about his performance of Schubert's Sonata in B-flat—that "Ashkenazy was a little boring in his determined perfection. After a while one longed for . . . a wrong note, even an error in taste. Anything. But nothing ever happened. And that was the trouble." But the career of an uncelebrated young pianist, whose engagements throughout the country depend on the review he gets in the *Times*, *can* be damaged by the nonsense in that review, and is. Friends asked me to come to the debut recital of a young pianist named Michael Rogers a few years ago; and I was prepared for the talent they had assured me he had, but not for the astounding mastery of instrument and music that I heard. If the *Times* reviewer at the recital had described what was actually there to be heard, there probably would have been a contract for Rogers with a big management, and engagements throughout the country. But the *Times* reviewer described instead what normally could be expected to be heard at such a debut recital, demonstrating in this way his possession of the discerning ear that enabled him to recognize that Rogers had "an inborn flair for the keyboard," but also to perceive that he was not "as yet a finished artist," and so on. It was not the review that would bring a young pianist an overwhelming demand for appearances; and its damage will take years to undo.

THIS, THEN, is the situation I see in music criticism; and I think I am justified in feeling so strongly about it. Actually I have felt slightly better since last spring, when *Commonweal* began to publish the occasional writing of a young critic, Harris Green, who seems to be able to hear correctly and to want only to describe what he hears accurately.

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The State of Social Science

Ben B. Seligman

How does one review encyclopedias? Elephantine conglomerations of knowledge, they are likely to leave one dazed after several perusals. Perusals rather than readings, for one does not read an encyclopedia; one studies an entry here, scans a section there; one nibbles away at the contents and tries to discover a prevailing viewpoint. Frequently, there is no viewpoint to discover at all, for many encyclopedias are simply collections of alphabetized articles lacking any unity of outlook. This, however, is one charge it would not be fair to level against *The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences.** Its seventeen volumes—from "Ability" to "Zoosemiotics"—faithfully reflect the behavioristic, positivistic, and technicist ethos of our time.

I shall wish to return to this point later, but for the moment it is sufficient to remark that whatever the specific attributes of the new ethos may be, it stands in marked contrast to the humanistic outlook which informed the parent of the present work—*The Encyclopædia of the Social Sciences*—published by the same firm more than three decades ago. A work of editorial genius, the older publication was graced by impeccable scholarship and distinguished writing, so that to consult it became one of the delights of studying the social sciences. The very fact that the publisher plans to keep the older work in print is eloquent testimony to its acknowledged excellence.

The new encyclopedia suffers from comparison with the old. To begin with, it has no counterpart to the two massive introductions—one on the development of social thought and institutions, the other on the social sciences as disciplines—by which the older encyclopedia achieved a real interdisciplinary character. These were masterful articles, giving the reader a unique grasp of the interrelatedness of human endeavor. Their authors were giants of their day—E. R. A. Seligman, Harold Laski, Charles Beard, Robert MacIver, and others.

Since the new encyclopedia lacks such introductory material, one is forced, in evaluating it, to turn directly to the entries. Obviously, as a reviewer, I could not simply consider a random sample of these entries, for I would too often have landed in unknown territory. Besides, I wanted to know what the new encyclopedia had to say to someone like myself, an economist *cum* sociologist, or to a social scientist who also considers himself a "generalist." Therefore, I went directly to the subjects I know best. I began by reading a number of the 600 or so biographical entries. (The old encyclopedia had 4000 such entries and on that score alone retains its usefulness, although it must be said that the biographies in the *International Encyclopedia* are longer and more detailed.) The decision of the editors to include living people who have had an impact on the social sciences is defensible, but their selections are rather strange. Thus, there are biographies of Alvin Hansen and Ralph Hawtrey—noted living economists to be sure—but none of Paul Samuelson or Joan Robinson, who have done more to make the field what it is than any other contemporary members of their profession. Thus, too, there is an effusive portrait of Ludwig von Mises, an economist in the Austrian tradition, but none of Friedrich A. Hayek, often associated with Mises but a far more important figure, and one whose contributions will last a longer time.

Nor are economists the only ones to receive such peculiar treatment; similar oddities abound as well among the biographies of other social scientists honored with entries. A few examples must suffice. Veblen's biographer ties his subject far too closely to Marxism, neglecting to cite the two long and extremely critical essays which Veblen wrote on the subject; the note on C. Wright Mills catches the populist undertones in his thinking quite well but overlooks his latter-day infatuation with East European doctrine; the entry on John Maurice Clark, who taught economics at Columbia University for many years, fails to identify him as one of America's major institutionalist economists, and as a writer whose perception of the totality of human experience far transcends the narrow perspective of present-day economics.

Strangest of all, however, is the biography of Thomas Malthus, the gloomy 19th-century parson who was responsible for the most famous population theory of modern times. The entry on Malthus deals exclusively with his demography, but fails to show the significance of this for classical wage theory, even though it should be obvious that the "iron law of wages" requires a prior analysis of population trends. Moreover, the entry says nothing of Malthus's theory of gluts and economic crises, a theory later recognized by Lord Keynes to be far superior to the classical view (according to which, economic crises were impossible because supply generated its own demand). Malthus recognized that unspent funds were not always matched by investment, and that the consequent imbalance was one of the difficulties inherent in capitalism. Malthus quarreled with Ricardo on this issue, and the fact that the latter's argument prevailed sent economics off on the wrong track. Unfortunately, the author of Malthus's biography is himself a staunch Ricardian and is patently unwilling to credit Malthus with a clearer understanding of the economy than that held by his contemporaries.

To be fair, I should hasten to point out that not all the biographies are uniformly quirky or ill-balanced; some, in fact, are quite good. There is, for example, an appreciative account of the career of Ruth Benedict by Margaret Mead, who notes how well Benedict's work bridged anthropology and the humanities, an achievement that ought to set a standard for all social scientists. Then, too, the biography of Charles Darwin, with its excellent summaries of *The Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man*, is quite useful, as is the

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twenty-column entry on Freud, which observes that his ideas have the "remarkable property of being self-transcending"—a comment true of all genius.

TURNING from the biographies to articles on economics, I was struck by the fact that they contain a considerable amount of overlap and repetition. The idea of economic equilibrium, for instance, a notion that is little more than an academic exercise, can be found in some twenty different articles, all stating and restating the same theme. This would seem to indicate a rather disturbing carelessness on the part of the editors; indeed, one suspects that sharper editing might have saved at least one volume of space.

But if some articles are overly long and repetitious, others are far too skimpy and have little to say that is worthwhile. A case in point is the entry on poverty, which is not only abstract, but, curiously enough, written from the British standpoint. It is as though the editors had decided to discuss only the general principles of poverty, whatever these may be. (Is poverty really so abstract a phenomenon?) In any case, the reader learns very little of recent efforts to reduce poverty on this side of the Atlantic, nor does he learn why all our splendid intentions have degenerated into failure and social catastrophe. Perhaps the editors did not think much of the Johnson administration's War on Poverty, or perhaps they simply thought the subject unworthy of extensive discussion—whatever their reasons, the result is that a social problem of enormous human consequences is given only cavalier treatment.

And then there is the jargon. Perhaps jargon is inevitable in an encyclopedia such as this, which brings together the writings of so many academic professionals, but some of it is so painful that one can only weep for the English language. As it happens, the worst offenders in this respect are not the economists but the psychologists and the sociologists, some of the latter seeming incapable of writing a paragraph without dropping a "societal" into it. (One of the sociologists suggests that he can "operationalize a typology"; another speaks of "situation-specific deviances" that are "normatively disvalued.") The economists, however, have a disconcerting habit of their own; they may not jargonize, but they do have a pronounced fondness for the construction of mathematical models. This constitutes more than an attempt at accurate measurement; it is an effort to develop a social science free of the burden of value judgments. Such an effort, however, overlooks the fact that while value judgments may be subjective and personal, they are also facts of social life and, as such, legitimate objects of study. What is more, they affect both the questions one asks and the answers one seeks. One does not eliminate values by depending solely on what is observable, as behaviorists do; such a procedure simply relegates values to an underground existence, there to perform a most pernicious role. All of us, as Gunnar Myrdal has observed, are entangled in a web of conflicting values, and the first step toward clarity in economics would be to acknowledge that fact. Unfortunately, far from doing so, most of the articles in this encyclopedia attempt to create the impression that economics is an "objective" social science. It is an objectivity that has never existed and never will.

The over-emphasis on mathematical economics may account for the omission of the series of studies of specific industries which was a feature of the older encyclopedia. It can, of course, be argued that such material dates quickly, and that the articles in the earlier volumes are now merely historical curiosities. Nevertheless, the decision to forgo these articles is a questionable one: each generation ought to know something about the current organization of industry. But while the decision is questionable, it is not surprising; the present is an age of abstraction and theory in which facts and data are not popular, and in that respect, the *International Encyclopedia* is an accurate mirror of the age.

Nor are the present encyclopedia's sins of omission confined to articles on specific industries. Again and again, one discovers that material which ought to have been collected under one major entry is dispersed among other articles throughout the encyclopedia. Thus, industrialism is treated rather casually in twelve different places; political scientists will miss a separate article on the Supreme Court; and the IWW was apparently deemed unworthy of an entry. Perhaps the most egregious editorial gaffe is the omission of a central article on the child. In the original encyclopedia there are sixty-five pages of double columns covering child welfare, mortality, delinquency, guidance, neglected children, child labor, and many more subtopics. No one will argue that we have solved all the problems of childhood during the past three decades; on the contrary, the population explosion has, if anything, exacerbated the situation. By 1970 the total number of our population under the age of twenty will have reached about 85 million, and the number in trouble—born out of wedlock, in poverty, out of school, handicapped, mentally retarded, disturbed, delinquent, neglected, and abused—will total from 15 to 20 millions. The enormity of the problem should have impelled the editors to focus direct attention on children rather than offering scattered comments in no fewer than eighty different articles.

But if there is no article on the child in the new encyclopedia, there *is* one on adolescence, and it constitutes a needed and welcome updating of the 1933 entry. The earlier essay relied almost exclusively on G. Stanley Hall's contention that adolescence was all a matter of youthful *Sturm und Drang*. The present entry, by contrast, draws on a variety of insights into the nature of young-adult crises—Freud's theory of psychosexual development, Sullivan's concept of social interaction, Erikson's sequence of ego crises, and Piaget's notion of intelligence as biological adaptation. All of these are patently more useful in explaining adolescence than was the work of Hall.

Among the articles in the new encyclopedia which are worthy of particular praise are several dealing with the city; they are written by such notable authorities as Lewis Mumford, Robert S. Wood, Gideon Sjoberg, and Tor Anderson. Mumford's essay is a gem, and his stress on qualitative as well as quantita-

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tive aspects makes for a model of analysis that other contributors might have copied. His theme is essentially that of his earlier work, *The City in History*: while the city has provided a central geographic focus for a gigantic collection of labor, and though it has helped broaden human potentialities, it has also given rise to perversions and distortions that have been the bane of its development. According to Mumford, now that there are shopping centers and industrial parks surrounded by rings of suburban chaos, the only hope for reconstituting the city lies in regional integration. We realize how right he is when we observe the Megalopolis now running from Boston to Washington, or the gigantic stretches of urbanization that are beginning to proliferate elsewhere.

Despite the presence of such excellent articles as these, however, there is little doubt that the older encyclopedia had more breadth and depth than the present work. For example, one could discover numerous entries in the former that offered the necessary historical background for a thorough understanding of social and economic issues; there are few such articles in the latter. But at the same time, there is no denying that the new set contains many useful items which discuss developments that were unknown in earlier decades. For example, the present work includes an article on input-output tables, a new technique in economic analysis, by the inventor of the method, Wassily Leontief; as might be expected, it is a masterpiece of condensation. Then, too, the item on bureaucracy in the new encyclopedia is fuller and more scholarly than the parallel piece in the old one. The entry on ideology, however, is quite stuffy in style, and ends with an unconvincing defense of those who have proclaimed its demise in recent years. Indeed, throughout the encyclopedia one finds as a rule that the technical articles are quite good but that the more general entries are simply inferior. That, of course, is an unfortunate situation, for it is precisely the latter that ought to lead the reader to investigate the former.

HAVING plowed through the articles on economics (and taken several detours along the way), I turned to another group of entries within my area of interest: those on labor. I found them wanting. The article on the labor force is simply inaccurate; the writer fails to cite the correct sample size for the Current Population Survey, and his basic definitions are quite fuzzy. What is more, he simply sloughs off the problem facing those unemployed who in the late 50's were out of work for so long that they stopped looking for work. Labor legislation also gets short shrift, except for wages-and-hours laws, and one would have thought that the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) was sufficiently important an agency to warrant more than the sparse treatment it receives.

The discussion of industrial relations has little to do with that subject as it is generally known: it treats of the psychology of business and the sociology of work and expresses disappointment that the literature on unionism does not supply "integrating" concepts, whatever these may be. These articles simply will not do; let the reader beware.

From labor, I went on to check the entries on capitalism, imperialism, and radicalism. The older set included a brilliant if idiosyncratic piece on capitalism by Werner Sombart, which makes for fascinating reading despite its arrogant tone. The straightforward academic account in the present encyclopedia is no match for it. It does provide some additional information, but it does not really replace the older entry. In fact, it is not merely commonplace, but misleading. The encyclopedia is no better on imperialism; the article on the subject twists this idea into little more than an egregious piece of Marxist ideology, and winds up with the portentous proposition that the term is only "a general theory of international relations" lacking in historical realism. The reader can only stand aghast at this morsel of academic wisdom, which manages to suggest that imperialism is a fiction invented by radicals.

The piece on radicalism is the worst of the trio, asserting as it does that radicals lack sensitivity, flexibility, and something called "opportunistic economizing," attributes which are opposed to reasonableness and a readiness to surrender. It does not seem to occur to the writer that there are several shades of radicalism. The description he offers would appear to apply to Goldwaterites more than to those one usually labels as radicals, but the writer is unable to make any distinction between Left and Right and as a consequence his political analysis is muddled in the extreme.

IT IS, however, when one turns to the articles on psychology that one discovers the most blatant shortcomings of this encyclopedia. Ludwig von Bertalanffy has described modern psychology as "sterile and pompous scholasticism" and the description applies to the present case. For example, the entry on learning theory cannot do without the vacuous idea of stimulus-response, a notion that ought to have been relegated to a museum for archaic scientific theories alongside the chemical theory of phlogiston. Not surprisingly, the ideas of John Watson and B. F. Skinner provide the *leitmotiv* for most of the entries on the subject. Watson believed that human behavior could be controlled, if only it could be measured, and therefore maintained that the only aspect of behavior worth studying was that which could be measured. Watson was concerned only with control and predictability —predictably enough, he eventually became an advertising executive. For him, and for the later behaviorists whose viewpoint dominates this encyclopedia, "consciousness" and "mind" were meaningless expressions. Sad to say, most graduate students in psychology are today inculcated with this attitude, which precludes any intelligent consideration of the richness and complex variety of human actions.

According to behaviorist psychology, only the observable is meaningful, and only those external acts of behavior which are presumably subject to control are observable. The totalitarian potential of such a psychology has consistently been brushed aside by its advocates, who are seemingly untroubled by the question of the kind of behavior that is desirable. At any rate, this

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was no problem for Watson. Given his commitment to the pecuniary standards of his society, it was inevitable that behaviorism should become an eminently useful instrument for furthering a *Weltanschauung* in which the standards of Madison Avenue were dominant. Consciousness had no place in this system, for it would only inhibit the smooth functioning of the machine; behaviorism denied the motive force of purpose and it made man a robot responding to the stimulus of a toothpaste ad.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the *International Encyclopedia* contains no major discussion of consciousness. A behaviorist finds it impossible to grasp the meaning of this idea. There are scattered comments on consciousness in ten different articles, including those on Husserl, William James, Kant, and George Herbert Mead, but there is nothing like the fourteen columns devoted to the same topic in the older set by Kurt Kaffka, one of the giants of modern psychology.

Not unrelated to this is the use of the term "behavioral science" as a substitute for "social science." Bernard Berelson, a leading "behaviorist," gives the dubious credit for this achievement to the Ford Foundation, which was at one time anxious to sponsor a scientific approach in order to foster "objective behavioral knowledge." The Foundation preferred the term "behavioral science" and was ready to make huge grants if it were used. And so an approach, essentially Watsonian, was established by the power of money and applied to the whole range of the social sciences. Support for the new concept was lent by politicians who established the National Science Foundation in 1946; they eschewed the use of the term "social science" because it suggested "politics, socialism, or some form of social philosophy."

It is in keeping with the *International Encylcopedia*'s dominant tone of behaviorism and positivism that it should omit any article on humanism. The old encyclopedia adopted a strictly historical definition of the term, speaking only of the Renaissance revival of interest in the ancient classics. But however one defines the term, the humanistic outlook does imply that *man*, rather than mere technique, is the measure of things; it opposes the view that only the forms of science will lead us to the truth. Not only does the present work fail to have an article on humanism; it conspicuously fails to do justice to the humanist outlook. A case in point is the article on social anthropology, which informs the reader that academics now emphasize structure and models, and are attempting to create an ethnographic algebra, but which is forced to admit that this method is a severely limited one and that the imitation of physics in such a manner might not prove fruitful. Indeed, nothing seems more nonsensical than the fatuous effort to duplicate the successes of the "hard" sciences. It does not seem to occur to the new generation of scholars who are making this effort that the physical and social sciences necessarily exist in different universes of discourse, and that any attempt to enforce a shotgun marriage between the two can only wreak havoc. Anthropology would do better to continue to study social phenomena in the round, while at the same time examining connections among individuals and groups. Above all, it ought to pay attention to those aspects of life which are not readily amenable to statistical counting. As Walter Goldschmidt remarks, "If the results sometimes seem impressionistic, if there is a novelistic quality, nevertheless there is a closer sense of human reality."

The basic character of this encyclopedia is not altered by the inclusion of occasional articles critical of the behaviorist and positivistic thrust of contemporary social science. Such articles, to be sure, are welcome and provide necessary relief to the work's prevailing tone. Thus in a brilliant piece on alienation George Lichtheim argues that the positivist claim to a value-free social science is an illusion and can only lead to accepting situations in which individual hopes and desires are perpetually frustrated. And Abraham Kaplan demonstrates that positivism, with its stress on model building and its propensity for equation-mongering, is guilty of a semantic fallacy. The positivist, according to Kaplan, wishes to define his terms operationally, take his premises for granted, and then assert that his whole enterprise is "scientific." This creates the "myth of methodology," according to which ". . . it does not matter much what we do if only we do it right."

But such articles are rare exceptions; the typical entry in the new encyclopedia reveals a distressing mindlessness and lack of sensibility. The work as a whole, moreover, can only serve further to alienate the layman from the social scientist. For the typical social scientist of today prefers to speak only to his peers, and the unfortunate result is that the gap between scholar and citizen keeps widening. In the past, as Gunnar Myrdal has pointed out, the great scholars always managed to spare some time from their scientific work to speak to the people. At present, as this encyclopedia illustrates, social scientists have abdicated their responsibility for helping to enlighten the public. They have managed to effect a facile escape from the consideration of urgent issues; fascinated with the form of science, they neglect its substance.

To POINT all this out, to remonstrate against all the current intellectual fads so ably represented in the *International Encyclopedia*, may be tilting against windmills. But when the landscape is so filled with mechanical monsters, that seems to be the only thing left to do. The new encyclopedia will occupy three feet of my precious shelf-space, but I will keep it next to its distinguished predecessor, to which I shall continue to refer much more frequently.

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The Price of Revolution

THE SOVIET ACHIEVEMENT. By J. P. NETTL. *Harcourt, Brace & World. 288 pp. $6.95.*

Reviewed by ADAM B. ULAM

LIKE MANY another great and complex historical event, the Russian Revolution does not yield easily to popularization. Mr. Nettl tells us that he set out to write his book for the reader who is ". . . interested . . . in every damn thing . . . endlessly curious . . . neither an expert nor a sensationalist." It is, however, open to question whether such a reader will profit very much from a "balanced" treatment of the Revolution and its sequel, the Soviet regime. Even an author of Mr. Nettl's skill, setting out to write a popular account of a historical cataclysm and of the new civilization to which it gave birth, labors under a double disadvantage from the very beginning. He must voluntarily discard precision, which is the most valuable tool of the historian's craft; and he must eschew the sense of commitment and drama which imparts life to a partisan account of great events. What, then, is the successful popularizer to do? First, he must try to lend color and vividness to his narrative, and secondly, he must seek to relate events of a distant era and a different society to something within the reader's experience and knowledge. Which is quite an order.

As to the sense of vividness, Mr. Nettl declares at the outset that his plan was to "write about things rather than people." But the consequent "deliberate generality and its resultant dullness of style," as he rather masochistically notes, are largely overcome by the splendid illustrations which accompany the text. These consist of cartoons, paintings, photographs, and propaganda posters ranging from the pre-revolutionary era to our own days. Much of the pathos of the Soviet achievement is found in the contrasts which these illustrations present. Thus an early painting of *The Bolshevik*, a superhuman figure striding grimly ahead over crowds and buildings, is balanced by a 1967 photograph of Kosygin, in impeccably bourgeois attire, peering into a store window. Thus, too, the epigrammatic and experimental style of the post-civil-war posters gives way, in the mid-20's, to the restrained venom of the satirical representation of oppositionists like Trotsky and Kamenev; in the 30's, the style explodes into the shrill viciousness of caricatures of "people's enemies" and "saboteurs"; in the present, more restrained era Soviet poster art has subsided into fairly humorous depictions of such targets of criticism as bureaucratic red tape and youthful nonconformism.

In struggling with the problem of communication, of imparting to the British and American reader a sense of the realities of Soviet life, Mr. Nettl encounters—as any author must—sometimes insuperable difficulties. The trouble with the general reader, as defined in the preface, is not so much ignorance as over-sophistication. He distrusts facts and he demands interpretations; and above all he looks for the fashionable concepts so beloved by the new generation of social scientists and imposed by them on the reading public. There is, for example, that wretched word, "backwardness." A prize should be set aside for a book on Russia which will manage to avoid this term altogether, for it surely conceals more than it reveals about the nature of the country's society before 1917. Mr. Nettl does, to be sure, use the word with some caution. We are first told that the notion of "a backward decaying society . . . is oversimple," and then that "the Russia of 1917 was indeed a backward society but this description too can obscure more than it illuminates." Finally, the insufferable concept is shelved with the observation that "backwardness and modernity are relative concepts." However, he would have done better simply to describe the country's tremendous industrial growth during the three decades before the Revolution, and to point out that in some branches of science—not to mention literature and the arts—the Russia of 1914 could be favorably compared with the United States. Because it reminds the reader of the Congo, or even of China in the 20's, the term "backwardness," however qualified in its use, is bound to contribute a measure of confusion.

I AM NOT merely quibbling over words, for what is at issue here is the whole nature of the Soviet achievement. Is it really a *Soviet* achievement? Or would any other regime have accomplished as much, given command of the resources of a vast and rapidly developing country, and of a vigorous nation (or rather nations) with great historical traditions? Soviet sources delight in dazzling us with statistics showing the impressive increase over the past fifty years in literacy, industrial production, medical care, etc. Curiously enough, however, even the official doctrine acknowledges that insofar as the material appurtenances of modernization are concerned, the Bolshevik Revolution did not represent as fundamental a shift in Russian life as did, say, the Meiji Restoration in the life of Japan. Indeed, every Soviet textbook states that the history of feudal Russia ended with the emancipation of serfs in the 1860's. Whatever orators may proclaim on festive occasions, every Soviet student knows that industrialization progressed steadily under the rather imbecilic Nicholas II; and he knows that during the last decade of Tsardom, Russia's proverbially corrupt and oppressive bureaucracy managed to preside over an impressive feat of social engineering in regard to the country's rural life. Thus the Soviet student will be less ready to believe that there is something specifically Soviet about the figures for steel production and cosmonauts than will

ADAM B. ULAM *is professor of government at Harvard and author of* The Bolsheviks. *He reviewed Walter Laqueur's* The Fate of the Revolution *in our February issue.*

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many of his counterparts in the West—even if they happen to be violently opposed to Communism.

Similarly, Russia's performance during the Second World War is often cited as a vindication of the Communist regime. Here again it is useful to turn for a corrective to a man not likely to deprecate the Soviet achievement. In a public speech in 1945, Stalin chose to thank not Marxism-Leninism but the Great Russian nation for the victory. No other nation, he said in so many words, could have endured so many mistakes by its rulers and yet fought the enemy so passionately. "Mistakes" was, to be sure, a feeble euphemism. One recalls Yevtushenko's words about the millions of lives lost not only in the war among nations, but also in the "war against the nation."

But did not the Grim Forces of History preordain the Bolshevik triumph? It is certainly true that once the civil war had broken out the Bolsheviks showed a superior understanding of politics and political power and that the possibility of a moderate solution therefore grew exceedingly remote. But it is not correct to read this situation back into the period before 1917 and to speak, as Mr. Nettl does, of "the futility of any middle or reformist solution in pre-revolutionary Russia." The fact is that before 1914 *even the Bolsheviks* were in favor of such a solution, at least in their official pronouncements. Mr. Nettl is also inaccurate, to say the least, in presenting the alternatives during the civil war as being those of "a White Tsarist restoration or the maintenance of Soviet power." It was the Bolshevik's propaganda skill which made many people in Russia, and more abroad, believe that no other choice was available. But the student of Russian affairs should know, and the reader should be told, that most of the White regimes insisted that the future government of Russia be determined by a freely elected Constituent Assembly, that some of these regimes included men with political views as advanced as those of the Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks, and that Tsarism was so thoroughly discredited that even as conservative a White movement as that of Denikin did not advocate its restoration.

THESE INITIAL but quite basic defects are enough to mar what is otherwise a competent and readable account of the Soviet *record*. Mr. Nettl summarizes pithily the developments in Soviet politics, economy, and education. His verdict on the changes in the official ideology after 1956 is particularly apt and deserves to be repeated: "Facts have become sacred; they have been almost completely divorced from speculation. The era of a vulgarized Marxism kneading reality with grotesque generalization . . . has given way to a Marxism of no speculation at all." Moreover, Mr. Nettl is quite perceptive about the changing psychology of the ruling elite.

Much of the author's argument is bound up with the currently fashionable thesis of what might be called managerial determinism, according to which the requirements of the modern industrialized Russia preclude a return to Stalinism. Instead, they ordain a cautious, colorless authoritarianism of the type exemplified by Brezhnev and Kosygin. Speculating on the future, Mr. Nettl foresees a continuation of the process of liberalization and a further diffusion of decision making, but he has few hopes for democracy in the traditional sense of the word: "Participation will take place within the single Party . . . it will continue to be regarded as taking place through action and discussion and not through elections."

That is an eminently sensible prognosis, but by the same token a quite risky one, for all around us we see eminently sensible prognoses being disproved by facts. Who in 1956 could have supposed that in twelve years Czechoslovakia would have—if all too briefly—the most liberal, and Poland the most reactionary, atmosphere among the Communist states; that students in *West* Berlin would be rioting and chanting Maoist slogans? These bizarre developments may, of course, represent a temporary aberration, and perhaps the long-run tendency is indeed toward convergence, with ". . . the West turning increasingly to state management. . . ." It is entirely possible that on the road toward more bureaucratization, the West may encounter the USSR executing a march in the opposite direction, and that the two camps will coexist ever after in a bureaucratic halfway-house. But all that one can safely say fifty years after the Revolution is that a believer in Victorian middle-class values can be heartened by the present scene in the USSR. In what other society are the virtues of thrift, hard work, social cohesion, and discipline so greatly encouraged, prudery and decorous public manners so strictly enforced, the young and intellectuals kept so firmly in their place, as in the land of the Soviets?

Identity Problems

THE PASSIONATE PEOPLE: WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A JEW IN AMERICA. BY ROGER KAHN. *William Morrow. 350 pp. $6.95.*

Reviewed by MARSHALL SKLARE

ROGER KAHN'S *The Passionate People* (which, according to Herbert Kubly, "perhaps . . . does for the Jewish middle class what *"Our Crowd"* does for the monied upper-class Jew"), appears at a propitious moment. Not only are books dealing with Jewish subject matter still very much in vogue; it is also the case that the need to clarify Jewish identity has never been more pressing within the Jewish community itself. The same need, which is so overwhelming among Negroes at the present moment, presses almost as heavily upon Jews, although in different form and for different reasons. It has its origins in the fact that the new third- and fourth-generation Jew was not reared in an immigrant environment where identity problems could be resolved—however painfully—by spiritual and cultural influences emanating from the home, the primary group, and the neighborhood. Moreover, the decline of anti-Semitism has made

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group boundaries even more indeterminate than before. As a consequence the identity problems of members of a survivalist-oriented minority group such as the Jews tend to be magnified rather than reduced.

In sum, it was never easier, and never harder, to be a Jew. The more light, then, that can be shed on "what it means to be a Jew in America"—as Mr. Kahn's book is subtitled—the better.

KAHN SPENT four years working on *The Passionate People*. He interviewed Jews both affiliated and unaffiliated, in forty-one communities, and observed Jewish institutions in many of these cities. Confronted with the problem of organizing this vast body of material, Kahn selected a handful of his respondents and proceeded to write fictionalized portraits of them. He terms these portraits, which constitute the core of his book, "new identities for actual people."

A review of the portraits shows the variety of types he presents. The first is Max Farberman, a wealthy manufacturer of screen doors whom we meet as he is celebrating his son's Bar Mitzvah at a synagogue on Long Island. Then there is Jack Schrager, a Hollywood agent; Samson Wilson, a medical doctor who practices in a university town in the Carolinas; Harry Wolf, a disappointed musician from the Bronx who runs a dog kennel out West; Harriet Fromkin, a Manhattan psychoanalyst; Bernard Rogovin, a junior high school teacher in Brooklyn; Harry Goldenhammer, small-town businessman in Nebraska; Miriam Fleischacker, a housewife fighting the Birchites in California; Chaim Vrotchnik, an aged rabbi; Morton Applebaum, a businessman in a midwestern metropolis who is active in Jewish philanthropies; Myron Berman, the manager of a San Francisco nightclub which specializes in lewd entertainment, and his chief attraction, Marilyn Esther Wolf, a bottomless dancer; Jacob Linderman, a labor organizer, long since retired, who lives in the Bronx; Saul Lederman, an editor in his forties who works for a Manhattan publishing house; and David Nazaretsky, a concentration camp survivor who has become a millionaire home builder in California. In addition to these fictionalized studies Kahn offers three portraits of people who, because they are so prominent, are identified by their real names. These three are Al Rosen, the former baseball star, now a stockbroker; Shecky Greene, a night club comedian; and Harry D. Goldman of Rochester, an associate justice of the Appellate Division of the New York State Supreme Court.

Brief discussions of such topics as American Jewish history, the organization of the Jewish community, and the nature of Jewish religious life are interspersed throughout the book. Also included are observations made in the course of the author's travels: Rosh Hashanah at the Leo Baeck Temple in Los Angeles and Purim in Williamsburg. Finally there are a series of short interviews with prominent Jews—Max Fisher, a businessman from Detroit who is nationally known for his philanthropic activity on behalf of Jewish causes, and Sol Linowitz of Rochester, the obscure Jewish lawyer who became a public figure with the success of the Xerox Corporation and is now Ambassador to the OAS.

Given the intrinsic interest of his material and the jazzy skill with which he handles it, Kahn's book is hard to resist. But resist it we must. For the truth is that *The Passionate People* is more significant as a publishing phenomenon than as a contribution to understanding what it means to be a Jew in America.

THE DEFECTS of *The Passionate People* are endemic to what may be called "the new Jewish book." The new Jewish book is produced by a writer of non-fiction who is both responsive to, and a part of, the present interest in Jews. Such a writer is to be distinguished from the producer of the old Jewish book—the type which was standard until very recently. The author of the old Jewish book wrote out of a compelling personal need. He could not write anything else: Jewish problems seemed to him so much more significant than other problems. Thus he did not write for a market in the sense that publishers use the term—frequently he wrote for a small circle of cognoscenti.

If the old Jewish book is more "authentic" than the new, that is not to say that all old Jewish books are good books. Far from it. They are frequently parochial, irrelevant, and opaque. And even if the old Jewish writer did know how to write (many did not) and devoted himself to popular rather than abstruse themes, his books betrayed at times another repelling feature: the feeling of self-pity. The work of Ludwig Lewisohn, who, like Roger Kahn, devoted himself to the study of what it means to be a Jew in America, is a case in point. Yet despite the fact that the new Jewish book is free of all such symptomology, it suffers from equally lethal defects of its own.

To start with the least serious of these, the new Jewish book, written by an author who is not a specialist in Jewish culture, is generally replete with technical errors. Thus, to cite a few examples among many, Roger Kahn writes *"chasid* and *misnagdim"* on page 252, inadvertently combining a singular and a plural in a single phrase. On page 255 he confuses the role of rabbi and *baal tefillah* (leader of worship). On page 276 he shows his ignorance of the political movements that developed in Jewish life in the late 19th century by expressing surprise at the fact that the picture of the bearded man on the wall of Jacob Linderman's home (he the Socialist labor organizer!) is someone other than Theodor Herzl.

The second defect of the new Jewish book results from the compulsion under which it labors to engage, even to entice, the reader's attention—a compulsion that frequently issues in vulgarity and distortion. Kahn's portrait of Harriet Fromkin, the psychoanalyst who lives on Park Avenue, is a perfect illustration. Two relevant problems are touched on here—why so many analysts are Jewish, and the intriguing question of the Jewish identity of Jews whose professional preoccupation is the discovery and resolution of problems of identity. But instead of exploring these

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significant issues, Kahn chooses to emphasize something more titillating: despite her professional success, Dr. Fromkin is an unhappy woman, a divorcee who needs a man. Whatever else that may mean, the total effect of emphasizing it is to make the portrait irrelevant to the problem of "what it means to be a Jew in America."

But even when Kahn avoids such devices and keeps his story in balance, we cannot be sure that his conclusions about what it means to be a Jew in America are to be trusted. The portrait of the other doctor in the book, Sam Wilson, who practices in a university town in the Carolinas, is a case in point. Wilson apparently represents *the* Jewish doctor, and as such he is an outsider in his own profession. Because he is a Jew he is smarter than his Gentile colleagues—none of them is capable of practicing the kind of medicine he does. So great is the gulf between his competence and theirs that Gentile colleagues who would not deign to associate with him socially beg him to treat their families when serious illness threatens. But not only is Sam Wilson superior as a doctor, he is also superior as a man. Kahn has Wilson tell us the following:

> I see two kinds of people dominating American medicine. . . . There are the incompetents and the fascists. Take [Dr.] McGranery, a Catholic, right? A decent guy, sure. But a slow-moving, slow-thinking man. He has killed kids. He's damaged women. Not out of malice. McGranery just doesn't know. . . . Then there are fascists. By fascists I mean someone who does not give a stinking damn for the fate of other human beings. You find fascists running the medical schools and the hospitals. They care about systems and figures and birth rates and death rates . . . but what do they care about that little colored kid dying in a shack, crying in pain?

Nonetheless Sam Wilson is an unrealized human being. His tragedy, as Kahn sees it, is that he is spoiled by success and thus prevented from upsetting the medical applecart:

> He has too much now. . . . He has his practice and his hospital affiliation and his handsome, conservative wife. But if he could speak out, [he] would tell them a thing or two worth mentioning.

This portrait, flattering to the Jewish ego as it is, makes one very uneasy. The thoughtful reader is aware that most Jewish doctors practice in large urban centers. Many of them are affiliated with Jewish-sponsored hospitals or with hospitals where the representation of Jewish staff is very strong. If they are brilliant diagnosticians like Sam Wilson, they typically devote more time to correcting the mistakes of their less talented Jewish peers than those of anti-Semitic Gentile colleagues. They are not really outsiders.

Even the fact of Dr. Wilson's brilliance is troubling. We may be prepared to concede that as a result of parental pressure and as a consequence of what was once a flourishing pattern of discrimination against Jewish applicants to medical school, Jewish graduates have sometimes been intellectually superior to their Gentile peers. But this phenomenon belongs to the past. Thus, Kahn is left holding on to the idea of Jewish moral superiority—an idea by no means easy to demonstrate, and which, even if it could be demonstrated, might be as much connected with the sociological condition of marginality as the religious condition of following a moral code. And if the putative moral superiority of the Jew flows from a sociological abnormality, is it not fated to go the way of Jewish intellectual superiority?

These significant and very controversial issues—whether applied to the situation of the Jewish doctor or broadened to include the condition of Jews generally in our society—are certainly relevant to the problem of Jewish identity in America. But they are not seriously discussed in *The Passionate People,* Kahn preferring to leave the Jewish reader with the flattering notion that Jews are more sensitive than Gentiles—a passionate people. Even Gentiles who read the new Jewish book may find such Jewish ethnocentrism appealing. After all, Stephen Birmingham, himself a Gentile, found a large Gentile public willing to read a book devoted to documenting the assertion that the Jewish upper class was superior to the Gentile Four Hundred.

THE PORTRAITS of Sam Wilson, Harriet Fromkin, and others offer a clue to the final problem of Kahn's book. While he has collected a great body of data (and gives full license to his imagination in reconstructing the lives of his respondents) there emerge no firm intellectual criteria by which respondents were selected. As a result we are presented with a series of miscellaneous vignettes rather than a collection of portraits which illustrate contrasting resolutions of the problem of what it means to be a Jew in America. Such a collection of portraits could do what Kahn's book does not: help the reader locate his own identity problem. Entering empathically into the lives of different kinds of Jews, such a reader would be afforded the opportunity to consider what meaning their resolutions have for him.

If the limitations of *The Passionate People* are such that the book does not really convey what it means to be a Jew in America, it does touch on one theme which has so far been insufficiently explored in the burgeoning list of new Jewish books: the theme of the Holocaust. Surprisingly, except for theologians, no one has yet stopped to investigate, or even to ponder, the problems which the Holocaust presents to American Jews. There is, for example, the question of how human beings live with the realization that their lives were spared only by historical accident, that while they were prospering a Jewry even larger than their own was consumed in the gas chamber, and that this Jewry too had Gentile friends, neighbors, and business contacts who, as it turned out, were in many cases untrustworthy. What, then, is done with the feelings of guilt, shame and anomie which the Holocaust must produce? Are they repressed only to appear in disguised and destructive forms? Or are they being acted out in socially constructive ways?

It is to Kahn's credit that he is sensitive to this problem, which crops up in several portraits—most

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centrally in that of Saul Lederman, an editor in a New York publishing house. Lederman is assigned a new author: Herta Lieber Cohen, a Gentile born in Germany and now married—in a casual sort of way—to a Jewish artist. Assimilated and "liberated" though he is, Lederman cannot overlook her German identity, and in the midst of a sexual episode (one of many such in the book), he takes his revenge upon her. She may be an attractive woman, but to Lederman she stinks of the masters of Auschwitz.

One more portrait concludes *The Passionate People*. It is devoted to David Nazaretsky, the millionaire builder of Southern California who is a concentration-camp survivor. Others may forget Auschwitz, or at least try, but for Nazaretsky even the effort would be an act of futility; the good life can never erase his memories.

Kahn's sensitivity to this issue, whatever the limitations of his treatment of it, gives us some notion of the potentiality of the new Jewish book. The antennae of the new Jewish writer are capable of receiving signals which might be lost on the more inner-oriented writer of the old type. If these signals can be properly decoded and built upon, a definite analysis of what it means to be a Jew in America may yet be produced.

Serious Criticism

LANGUAGE AND SILENCE. By GEORGE STEINER. *Atheneum. 448 pp. $10.*

Reviewed by KEITH BOTSFORD

ONE EVENING some years ago in Cambridge (England) I was present at a party at which two dons had come to tell a third what a brilliant man George Steiner, being considered as a possible fellow of that august college, was. They cited his erudition, his great success with students, his high seriousness, his eloquence; they went into details of how he had overcome, in his writing, a certain

KEITH BOTSFORD, *a journalist and critic, is director of the National Translation Center at Austin, Texas. He is the author of* The March-Man, *a novel.*

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"sweaty and rather ostentatious learning" and praised his championing of difficult literatures and intolerably arduous reading. It was all done in such a way as to make it elegantly, almost casually, clear that all these items of praise were really meant to damn the man—and at any price. A curiously English and unfair performance.

Why, I wondered, if Steiner was possessed of such obvious virtues, couldn't they forgive him his imperfections and extract from him his proper usefulness? Having since read more of Steiner's work than I had then, I now think their main objection was to what Steiner himself was most proud of: his whole approach to literature. For them, Steiner took it all too seriously. He was too stubborn, too insistent. He bent their ears; he wouldn't let up; he was humorless and unrelenting. Plainly, for some, such qualities are virtues; for others, intolerable vices. One thing was certain, Steiner at least had not been misjudged; he had adopted a position, stuck to it, and couldn't expect to win a popularity contest with it. He was being taken at his written word.

ELEMENTS OF his critical stance are scattered throughout the essays in his most recent book, *Language and Silence*, from the admission on the first page that the critic is in some way a eunuch to the manic note with which Steiner gives Marxism-Leninism credit for at least "taking literature seriously." "To shoot a man," Steiner says, "because one disagrees with his interpretation of Darwin or Hegel is a sinister tribute to the supremacy of ideas in human affairs—but a tribute nevertheless."

The obsessive intent of Steiner's work is to be *that* important. His method is best revealed in the admiration he feels for the way Georg Lukacs brings "philosophical equipment" to bear on "literary problems" and for Lukacs's "sense of history," his feeling "for the rootedness of the imagination in time and in place." These, again, can be virtues; they can also be vices. A mind that is long on knowledge is inclined to be short on worldly sophistication; if it delights in categorization, it will also be self-indulgent toward sweeping generalizations. Such a mind may impress, but it will not charm Cambridge dons, who are neither taxonomists of ideas nor *philosophes* by temperament.

This very *Mitteleuropäisch* quality of his mind serves Steiner well when, as in the best essays in this book, it is related back to his own experience. For Steiner is a man of conscience; of intellectual penetration, if not of logic; of sympathy; of judgment, courage, and stubborn honesty. He is a tendentious writer with no humor or self-irony of any kind, but he is not to be found on the side of the pusillanimous: his causes are unfashionable and unpopular.

He is, for instance, the first critic in ages to challenge (for that matter, to consider seriously) the great *idée reçue* of criticism since the last war—namely, that criticism is an effective substitute for the literature on which it feeds. His reflections on being a Jew and a "survivor" are a passionate, moving confession. Life today, and certainly criticism, offers fewer hard truths than those Steiner reveals in demonstrating the unimaginability of the Holocaust and the guilt lodged in the heart of any survivor.

True, the tone in these more personal pieces is a little shrill, but I think it is valid, in a way the hysteria in his one excursus into fiction, *Anno Domini*, was not. Steiner often fails to imagine concretely, or to experience, what he describes (his argument against Maurice Girodias and erotic literature is a particularly painful instance of this failure); but when he is at his gamiest and most rhetorical, there is always the suggestion of the man behind the argument. While the various plights he describes are perhaps not equally bewailed by all, his *own* plight in facing the moral issues does move the reader and involve him.

Naturally, any man so addicted to broad arguments is prone to producing analyses, observations, comments, and conclusions that are either unclear, refutable, or at the least subject to widely differing interpretations; the tone of dogma and the prevailing rhetoric almost insist on the reader's supplying his own constant skepticism on margins dotted with innumerable question marks. Similarly, it is only to be expected that in a big book, covering the production of a fertile, reactive mind over half a decade, the results should be uneven. Some essays in *Language and Silence* would be, if Steiner's were a lesser mind, mere trivia. Those on purely literary subjects—on Kafka, Mann, Günter Grass, and Lawrence Durrell—are literary journalism, neither better nor worse than most. Three reduplicative essays on Lukacs are unclear as an exposition of Lukacs's thought, and as apologetics for his theories they fail to convince. There are good examples of *haute vulgarisation*, such as the essay on Claude Lévi-Strauss. Finally, there are several essays centered on theories of language and translation which are ingenious and first-class; they stand, however, shoulder to shoulder with pedestrian restatements of the relation of politics to literature and glances into pop and McLuhan that seem to catch all the signs of the times and little of their sense.

However, I am sure that Steiner would insist that he be judged by the central thesis on which all the essays in this book ring various changes—what he calls the "retreat from the word." Summarized as briefly as possible, and shorn of the considerable baggage of argument and evidence that lends it both density and plausibility, Steiner's thesis is that we have lost our belief in language, and that the primacy of the word, which for centuries bore "solemn witness to the belief that all truth and realness . . . can be housed inside the walls of language," has been challenged almost beyond recall.

The reasons for this are many. For one, the growth and "progressive untranslatability" of mathematical and symbolic languages "divided the experience and perception of reality into separate domains . . . except in moments of bleak clarity, we do not yet act as if this were true." We do not see "how the cult of the positive, the exact, and the predictive" has invaded us, and we fail to note how the disciplines, history and philosophy among others, that were

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once part of the legitimate province of the artist, have now been rapt from him by the "ambitions of scientific rigor and prophecy."

The 19th century, Steiner argues, was already aware of "the gap between the new sense of psychological reality and the old modes of rhetorical and poetic statement"; but the 20th century compounded the difficulties. The artist today comes "after the unprecedented ruin of humane values and hopes by the political bestiality of our age."

How, then, Steiner asks, are we to feel, if the "life of the printed word" and our capacity to identify with imaginary characters and sentiments, the traditional components of literature, actually serve to diminish "the immediacy, the hard edge of actual circumstance"? Subject to attack on all sides, language practically ceases to be an appropriate tool. The artist seeks other solutions—"transrational experience," which denies the artificial, "temporal structure of language"; or Surrealism, which skips causation; or like Mallarmé, he makes of words acts not primarily of *communication* but of *initiation* into a private mystery (Steiner's emphases).

Steiner goes on to define three ultimate "solutions" to our dilemma. The first two are the light of spiritual illumination (carefully distinguished from any airy-fairy mysticism) and music, which is "the deeper, more numenous" code. In both, he suggests, art progresses beyond language: for where language "ceases, or suffers radical mutation, the word bears witness to an inexpressible reality, or to a syntax more supple, more penetrating than its own."

His third "solution" is Silence, which lies beyond literature in "the fact of renunciation, the chosen silence." What Steiner is saying, finally, is that art is "entrapped" and "diminished" when it is given articulate form. His argument against our daily language is just that: that it is daily, and hence shares "a common code of meaning" which "necessarily impoverishes and generalizes the unique, individual life-force of unconscious creation." Ideally, we should each have our own private language, but because language has a "socialized, conventional nature," the only proper private language is Silence.

So NOW we come (as one does in the course of every major Steiner essay) to the moral imperatives. And what are these? It is not, Steiner says, that he wants to impose silence on all of us; but, speaking as one who "feels the condition of language is in question," he asks us whether we are not writing too much, "whether the deluge of print in which we seek our deafened way is not in itself a subversion of meaning." He also wonders whether we don't talk too much, don't gossip too much, don't make "common what was private." He asks us to "keep literature literate," we writers who are the guardians and shapers of speech: to return to that condition of silence in which the secret urgencies of thought and language came upon us of yore. His controlling metaphor is that admirably silent sea, "ready for the wonder of the word."

If you are like me, Steiner's thesis, so absorbingly addressed to his own peers, to other writers, will irritate you: by its immodesty, by the colossal weight of evidence brought to bear on a situation with which no writer alive and thinking can be unfamiliar. After all, to take but one point, the argument that there are too many books is as old as history; restating this as an advocacy of silence isn't going to prevent words from mating and multiplying. And is it not already something of a commonplace that we are divorced from that part of the language of reality which is "scientific"? Nevertheless, having observed that nothing really relevant long remains uncommunicable, or uncommunicated in some form, we may still feel that, ultimately, the important discoveries of this "scientific" language will be made communicable to us, regardless of the fact that the two languages will continue to pursue their separate ways.

Then, too, despite Steiner's pessimism on the subject, we may believe that the spread of literacy,

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even fractional literacy, is probably more of a good thing than a bad. We may doubt that the condition of language itself is thereby seriously put in question: except as it always has been in the sense that it is being daily, and rightly, reconsidered. And as for the "deterioration" of language, we may consider that each such breakdown of the common code merely conceals a corresponding advance, which it is the business of the writer to exploit—with, or in spite of, masscult, pornography, or political bestiality.

I agree with Steiner that we live, in language, at a pivotal moment between past and future modes of expression, but though I would have much to say against our times, I can't believe that Steiner's way of stating a writer's condition today, or the moral imperatives facing him, has anything to do with my situation, which merely reflects a compulsion to communicate what I feel is personally urgent or generally relevant. I know we've all talked too much, written too much, and gossiped too much; but my regrets for this are my own. Like the dons of Cambridge, I'm afraid I finally found myself distrustful of humorless and inhuman statements of the Apocalypse.

Dark Dreams

O THE CHIMNEYS. By NELLY SACHS. Translated by MICHAEL HAMBURGER, RUTH and MATTHEW MEAD, MICHAEL ROLOFF, and CHRISTINE HOLME. *Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 387 pp. $7.50.*

Reviewed by FRITZ J. RADDATZ

GERMANY, a country whose inhabitants are fond of being called the people of poets and thinkers, has often reserved a "special treatment" of her own for just such men. Consider the fate of Marx and Engels, Einstein, Thomas Mann, and Brecht—all of them barely survived that treatment. Indeed, anyone wishing to pay his respects to Germany's true representatives to the world community would have to visit cemeteries in Paris and London, New York and California, Rio de Janeiro and Switzerland, Sweden and Siberia. Of course, Germany at present is not addicted either to murder or to persecution, but many a German author is now faced with a new danger: he is "welcomed home," smothered by incense and fraternal kisses. Brecht, for example, whose work has been enthroned as "classic" German literature, has become so thoroughly accepted that the explosive social message of his plays has been completely dissipated. And Nelly Sachs—to take a more recent case in point—has been carried off to a region beyond all critical consideration by having been pronounced the official German poet of atonement, the high priestess of the sorrows and lamentations of the Jewish people. As a result, those who write in German about her work produce nothing but hymns of praise.

What is needed, however, is an appraisal of the specific quality of this lyric poet, whose life ceased at its midpoint to be a German life. Until her forty-eighth year, she was lodged in her father's villa in the best section of Berlin, where she had grown up as a typical daughter of the elite, sheltered from the trials of life. She was exposed to private tutors and to the liberal arts; to an upper-middle-class, emancipated Jewish milieu. Her literary idol was Selma Lagerlof, the splendid Swedish author whom no one could ever suspect of literary ambition. To her, the "luminous model," Nelly Sachs dedicated the only book she published before 1947, a collection of legends and sagas which appeared in 1921. The motifs of the Christian Middle Ages dominate the book, which talks about the Crusades but not about the misery the Crusades brought to the Jewish people. According to Olaf Lagercranz, the Swedish literary historian, "The entire book is stamped by an emphatically Christian *Weltanschauung.*" One of the tales, for instance, is called "The Christ Image," and its lyric stance, its images and metaphors, are determined by the mystique of the Christian Passion and the concept of reconciliation characteristic of Pietism.

Nelly Sachs grew up among the middle classes so classically described by Fontane, those Prussian manufacturers who longed for higher things. The Jews among them tended to be German nationalists and World War I volunteers who had won the Iron Cross; their sentiments were anti-democratic and often anti-republican. Later, they voted for Hindenburg, the hero of the First World War, and with his help they elected their own fate, the end of their existence. Many of them—Nelly Sachs included—did not know what it meant to be Jewish until, finally, they were told.

Suddenly labeled a Jew, Nelly Sachs could no longer remain a disciple of Jacob Böhme, the mystic and pious Christian. Now she had to discover herself as a Jew—a grotesque and almost absurd process for one who was to remain for many years a writer in the German language, a language which wanted no part of her, but to which she remained bound. The language of the murderers continued to be the language of the victim. The work of Nelly Sachs is informed by this dialectic of disaster; she wrests poetry of great beauty from it, but she often succumbs to its tension as well.

DRAWN MORE to transfiguration than to clarification, given to inner contemplation rather than to rational dispute or any other kind of conflict, Nelly Sachs turned to Hasidism, whose founder, the Baal Shem Tov, permitted comparison with Jesus. Even more important was her reading in the Zohar, which, like the writings of Jacob Böhme, envisions God as a holy nothingness, as silence and eternal night. Olaf Lagercranz has demonstrated the profound influence of this work on her, the weighty justification it provided for her use of language. Thus one chapter of the Zohar—Nelly Sachs possessed a German translation of it—contains a commentary on Genesis which takes the first three words of the Bible, "Bereshit bara Elohim," to mean not that God created some-

FRITZ J. RADDATZ, *a new contributor, is editor-in-chief of the German publishing firm, Rowohlt Verlag. Mr. Raddatz's essay was translated from the German by* CARL S. SINGER.

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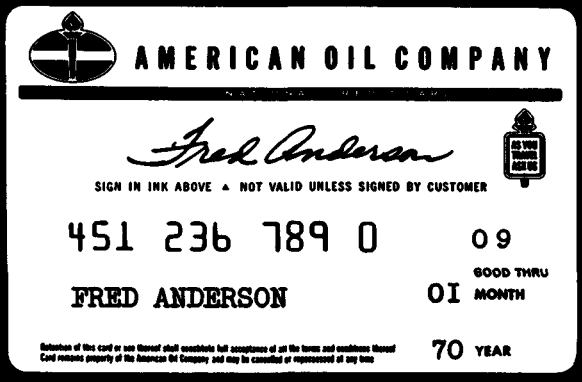

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thing but that Creation began with the sowing of letters and numbers, the holy seed of the world. The word was first; it created the Deity; it is divine. In this idea Nelly Sachs must have found a kind of salvation: language became a preserver and protector, a home and a refuge for the unprotected, homeless refugee. (She had managed to escape to Sweden in 1940.)

One can find this element of a virtually life-preserving Jewish mysticism, based on the Zohar, in the following poem; even as it denies words the capacity to communicate, it attempts a new creation by means of words, and it gives priority to words over reality:

Nicht mit meinem Munde
der
Erde
Sonne
Frühling
Schweigen
auf der Zunge wachsen lasst
weiss ich das Licht
eures entschwundenen
Alphabetes
zu entzünden.

. . . .

So muss ich denn aufstehen
und diesen Felsen
durchschmerzen
bis ich Staubgeworfene
brautlich Verschleierte
den Seeleneingang fand
wo das immer knospende
Samenkorn
die erste Wunde
ins Geheimnis schlägt.

(Not with my mouth/ which/ grows on its tongue/ earth/ sun/ spring/ silence/ can I manage to kindle/ the light/ of your faded alphabet. . . . So I must arise/ and toil through this rock/ till I, turned to dust,/ veiled as a bride,/ found the entrance to the soul/ where the seed kernel, ever sprouting/ inflicts the first wound/ upon the mystery.)

In fact, the influence of the ancient Jewish religious tradition can be traced in all the work of Nelly Sachs and extends even to matters of detail. Often, indeed, one cannot grasp what she means or the significance of what she says —one cannot surmount the proverbial "difficulty" of her poetry—without going back to the Book of Books. In his study of her work, Jurgen P. Wallmann calls attention to many examples of Nelly Sachs's utilization of the Bible, as can be seen from the following interpretation:

> In the poem "Chorus of the Stones" the stones say: "You heads of Jacob,/ For you we hide the roots of dreams/ And let the airy angel's ladders/ Sprout like the tendrils of a bed of bindweed." The heads of Jacob addressed here are the children of Israel, the progeny of Jacob, whose other name, according to Genesis 32:28 is Israel; for them the stones, which are picked up for the purpose of deadly throws, are the ladders of the angels, which through death, open up the way to God. The image derives from Genesis 28: 10-17, where one is told how Jacob dreams of a celestial ladder on which the angels of the Lord climb up and down, and on whose uppermost rung stands God, who pronounces His blessing upon Jacob and his progeny.

SIMILAR INFLUENCES can be discovered in Nelly Sachs's play, *The Lost and Saved Again Alphabet.* The very title of the play, as well as her comment on it—"The alphabet is the land where the spirit settles and the holy name flowers"—are evidence for her absorption in kabbalistic and pre-kabbalistic doctrines. Moreover, there is much in the play that alludes to Ezekiel, who was ordered by the Lord to eat a scroll of scripture (Ezek. 3), and also to Rabbi Meir, the Talmudic sage, from whom Helmut Geissler quotes the following in his essay on Nelly Sachs:

> . . . When I came to Rabbi Ismael he asked me: My son, what is your occupation! I replied to him: I am a (Torah-)scribe. Then he spoke to me: My son, be careful in your work for it is God's work; if you leave out only one letter or inscribe one too many you will destroy the entire world.

Nelly Sachs's writing, then, is impelled by an almost biblical devotion to the primal forces of numbers and letters, to death and resurrection in the word:

. . . Ihr habt euer Alphabet
erschlagen—
Eure Buchstaben vergessen—
Sintflutertrunken ist euer Wort.

(. . . You have slain your alphabet—/ Forgotten your letters—/ Your word has perished in the Flood.)

At the same time, her writing can frequently be characterized as constricted, eyeless—and endlessly repetitive. The very titles of her books evoke loneliness and darkness—*In the Habitations of Death; Eclipse of the Stars; And No One Knows How to Go On; Flight and Metamorphosis; Journey Into a Dustless Realm; Death Still Celebrates Life*—and her basic vocabulary resounds in a distinctly minor key: stone and sand, dread and night, dying and death. It is the poetry of a human being who for seven years lived in mortal danger: "Writing was my mute scream." It is the poetry of a human being who had to learn to live anew in an alien world with an alien language, a human being whose friends were dead and whose love had been murdered. Life was preserved by the word; deeds meant death.

Accordingly, the work of this woman includes no love poetry in the usual sense of that term. In the case of Nelly Sachs, the poetry of love is always the poetry of reminiscence. It consists of solemn speech rather than personal communication; the title of one such poem is "Vainly." In a strange way, this element of reminiscence can also result in a language of reminiscence, an old language that strikes one as both splendid and purple. Thus, in her "Chorus of the Stars," the planet Earth is beautified intolerably in an aimless stream of metaphors that express nothing:

We stars, we stars
We wandering, glistening, singing dust—
Earth, our sister, has gone blind
Among the constellations of heaven—
A scream she has become
Among the singers—
She, richest in longing
Who began her task—to form angels—in dust,
She whose secret contains bliss
Like streams bearing gold—
Poured out into the night she lies
Like wine in the streets—

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Evil's yellow sulfur lights flicker
over her body.

O earth, earth
Star of stars
Veined by spoors of homesickness
Begun by God Himself—
Have you no one who remembers
your youth?
No one who will surrender him-
self as the swimmer
To the oceans of death?
Has no one's longing ripened
So it will rise like the angelically
flying seed
Of the dandelion blossom?

Her repeated cries of invocations—"O time, O the hills of dust, O the chimneys, O world, O my children, O the blossoms of dying in the clouds, O the night of the weeping children"—tend to turn into mawkish whines; the force of a lyric formula of entreaty languishes and yields to a poeticized arabesque. Occasionally, the predominant pietistic-metaphysical attitude of forgiving and understanding, of lamentation rather than complaint, changes from a hymn-like tone to one of sentimentality which rings untrue and unconvincing. Thus she writes, "Then she kisses the air-born being and dies"—but why is the child of the insane mother an air-born being?—or "to where tears mean eternity"—but where do tears mean eternity? Her images and metaphors can go so far in prettifying a state of affairs that they turn the bones of murdered children into flutes:

Ear of mankind
overgrown with nettles,
would you hear?
If the voice of the prophets
blew
on flutes made of murdered chil-
dren's bones
and exhaled airs burnt with
martyrs' cries—
if they built a bridge of old men's
dying
groans—
Ear of mankind
occupied with small sounds,
would you hear?

EVEN THE DIGNITY and grandeur of Nelly Sachs's more successful poems tend to be disfigured by their vocabulary of pathos, their pompously disjunctive syntax, and by a language which strides on stilts. To be sure, these disturbing mannerisms of solemnity appear a good deal more sober when they are transposed into English idiom—if only because very few of the translations in this volume actually preserve the shape, tone, and music of the originals. For example, ugly and banal idioms such as the German *"wissen um"* cease to be irritating when rendered as "to know of"; and the pathetic *"Demut der Luft"* is toned down to "humble air." Thus, too, when the original has blood being kindled *"mit der Sehnsucht Zunge,"* the English version simply refers to "its yearning tongues." Nor is English burdened by such bloated sounds as those involved in the heavy accent of the genitive case; words like *des Sandelbaumes* must be rendered by the harmless and sober plural: "trees." In short, the changes necessitated by translation are considerable. A poem like "Bewitched is half of everything," which in German relies conspicuously on stresses, is perceptibly transformed when *"Narbe aus Heimweh"* is rendered as "homesickness scar," and *"Engelvergessenes"* as "what angels forgot"; when a *"Lachmöve"* becomes a mere "laughing gull"; and when the grammatically involved *"Ausfahrt im Sterben der Rätsel Kometenschweif"* is tamed to "The enigmas' trail of comets erupts in death."

The different effects achieved in the English versions by no means represent a failure on the part of the agile and skillful translators; they are due rather to the fact that American idiom simply does not seem to have at its disposal the romanticizing vocabulary which lets lamentation degenerate into a whine. "Woe tendril" does not match the sentimentality of *"Weheranke,"* nor "moon colored bones" that of *"mondenen Gebeinen"*; and *"der Schöpfungsvulkane Erstlingsschrei"* is not simply the same as "the first cry of the creative volcano." The specific gravity of the German vocabulary tends to get lost, along with the more distressing ballast of tradition which sometimes turns Nelly Sachs's work into a florid kind of "women's poetry." One can see this clearly by comparing the poem, "How many oceans have vanished in the sand" with the

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original German. It is precisely by avoiding verb-forms like "have vanished" that the German succeeds in inducing the emotions of a chorale. Moreover, can one really translate words like *"Sanghorn,"* or *"Todverlassenheit"* or *"Heimwehfäden"*? They are not the same as "singing horn," "mortal abandonment," and "threads for longing home." Then, too, the tenth line of the poem consists of two German words, *"Wieviel Heimwehfäden,"* and this results in a certain tempo that is an essential ingredient of a lyric poem. In English, however, the phrase is rendered by eight words, so that a different melody is produced, one that does not give rise to the sentimental and all but professional pathos of a romantic joy in singing and songs.

NELLY SACHS has a black theme: the fate of those who were beaten to death, gassed, murdered on an assembly line, stamped to pieces by a gigantically organized machinery of death. But she has frequently managed to use pastels to cover over this theme: "And evening again has the violet-shy word/that only grows so blue in the homeland:/ Good night!" That is frosted foam; it is not the frozen scream of such lines as "When the great terror came/ I —fell dumb/ Fish with its deathly side/ turned upward/ air bubbles paid for the grappling breath." (It is known that for five days after a Gestapo hearing, Nelly Sachs suffered from paralysis of the larynx.)

Whenever Nelly Sachs has something precise to report; when she is not engaged in weaving veils of words out of fairy tales, sagas, and Christian-Judaic mysticism; when she "narrates" her awesome experience concretely; when, as it were, she is reporting the news from that easily identifiable planet of barbarism—at such times she achieves great poetry. For example there is not one word too many, and not one mawkish sound in a poem like "Old Men," and there is no shimmering adjectival ornamentation in that almost epic tale of an escape, "Someone Comes," which describes her linguistic privation as an emigrant:

A stranger always has
his homeland in his arms
like an orphan
for which he may be seeking
nothing but a grave.

Many of the later poems of Nelly Sachs have a great and almost wise chasteness. Thus "Landscape of Screams," "Oblivion! Skin," and "Line Like" are of transparent beauty—shy, sparse of words, unyielding and intense. In such poems, the lace of women's clubs is torn to shreds; the brown shirts are no longer purple; the spell of an ingrained German tradition and the pull of a newly chosen but imperfectly assimilated heritage are not, to be sure, suspended but they are overcome. In such poems the mysterious dialectic of art holds sway and Nelly Sachs is no longer the victim; she is, at last, the victor.

Roots of Anti-Semitism

THE FRENCH ENLIGHTENMENT AND THE JEWS. By ARTHUR HERTZBERG. *Columbia University Press. 420 pp. $12.50.*

Reviewed by JACOB KATZ

THE HISTORY OF European Jewry during the last two or three hundred years has assumed, in our generation, an interest that goes beyond the usual historical curiosity. Paradoxically enough, the attention now being paid to the Jewish communities of Europe is in many ways directly attributable to the fact that for the most part these communities no longer exist; what impels the historian to search through the records of the past is the expectation, often articulated, of finding in them some explanation for the terrible riddle of the Holocaust. This of course is more particularly true in the case of German Jewry, but it holds also for the investigation of other Jewish communities as well. The experience of the Hitler period revealed just how precarious was the situation of *all* Jewish communities within their respective environments. French Jewry, for instance, although it did not perish altogether, underwent the profound shock of losing at one stroke whatever security it had acquired during the period of integration. The phenomenon of integration itself, therefore, has become for the historian a primary object of reexamination; and the burning question behind any such reexamination must necessarily be whether the bargain of emancipation and social acceptance that was won by Jews in European countries might not have been deeply flawed from the beginning.

This, indeed, is the question that hovers in the background of Arthur Hertzberg's book. He sets out to review the ideas and events which led the National Assembly of the French Revolution to emancipate the Sephardic Jews of France on January 28, 1790 and the Ashkenazim on September 27, 1791. He reviews the history of the two French-Jewish communities in the light of these decisive turning points, and examines the turning points themselves from the vantage point of our own days. Now, those who incline to doubt the objectivity of historical research in general will perhaps find additional support for their skepticism in this particular combination of scholarship with the perspective of contemporary issues. But the fact is that historical research does not necessarily suffer a decrease in quality when it is motivated by contemporary concerns (nor, for that matter, does an attitude of disinterested inquiry constitute an automatic guarantee of scholarly rigor). Arthur Hertzberg's book is that of a scholar; his historical sources are carefully interpreted; he has gone to great pains to gather the relevant facts and has narrated them skillfully in a manner which holds the interest of the serious reader of history. Hertzberg's concern with present-day problems has left traces in his presentation without detracting from the essential scholarly nature of the book; if anything, the connection which he draws with current problems enhances the value of his work for the general reader.

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THE JEWS were expelled from French territory in 1394, at the end of the Middle Ages, and, as the Edict of Expulsion issued at that time was never revoked, it remained officially illegal in subsequent years for Jews to take up residence in France. How, then, did new communities in fact come into being? One path was taken by the Sephardim in southern France, in the communities of Bordeaux, Bayonne, and Marseilles. There, Jews entering the country as Marranos were admitted at first under the guise of "New Christians"; when those who remained attached to Judaism began to practice their religion with some degree of openness, the authorities pretended not to notice. Still, it was not until 1723 that the "New Christians" were officially acknowledged as Jews in *lettres patentes* granted by Louis XV. A second path was followed by the Ashkenazi Jews of Alsace and Lorraine, who were more or less involuntarily acquired between 1552 and 1648, in a period which saw France expand eastward at the expense of the German Reich. Jews living in those territories were left unmolested, and some newcomers were admitted. In both cases, the leniency practiced by the authorities must be attributed to a general lessening of religious zealotry as well as to an incipient mercantilism which lent growing weight to economic considerations in the formulation of policy.

The history of the Jewish communities of France has been discussed in various articles and monographs that have concerned themselves with individual communities. The great merit of Hertzberg's book lies in its presentation of the history of French Jewry as a whole in the pre-Revolutionary era in a meaningful synopsis that connects the history of the Jews with developments within the state and society at large, as well as with developments in the realm of ideas and ideologies. In the fields of economic endeavor, legalistic struggles for particular rights, communal organization, religious conduct, and cultural adaptation, Hertzberg records the main events, changes, successes and failures that led ultimately to the granting of Jewish emancipation in 1790 and 1791.

This culmination, Hertzberg maintains, was by and large anticipated a hundred years earlier when Jean Baptiste Colbert, the chief minister of Louis XIV, protected Jews against economic competitors and religious adversaries as an act of *raison d'état*. Hertzberg claims that by so doing, Colbert "secularized the question of the Jews in French statesmanship." But I do not think this statement is borne out by the story as it unfolds. There is a difference, not sufficiently stressed by Hertzberg, between the issues at stake during the 17th and 18th centuries and well up to the threshold of the Revolution, and those which became central in the period of the Revolution proper. In the earlier period, the issue was whether Jews were to be tolerated at all. Colbert and most of the statesmen of absolutism answered this question in the affirmative, but even so they did not envision more than the admittance of Jews into France *qua* Jews—that is, as aliens whose rights and obligations had to be settled on an *ad hoc* basis. The idea of transforming these strangers into citizens was a new one; though it was discussed more or less explicitly in the writings of some of the philosophers, it became an issue only a comparatively short time before the Revolution. Hertzberg himself relates the attempts made before as well as during the Revolution to blur the differences between Jews and Frenchmen, to forget the special origin of the Jews in order to include them inadvertently, so to speak, among the subjects of the king and hence as citizens of the New State. But this was not to be. The special status of the Jews as strangers—indeed as members of a separate nation—was too obvious to be glossed over. Jews had to be "emancipated," that is, formally transformed from strangers into citizens. How this was accomplished is vividly described by Hertzberg, and, notwithstanding the fact that this chapter in Jewish history has been retold many times, his presentation is of no little interest.

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Hertzberg's account of the emancipation process is notable both for its accuracy on the factual level and for the sense of the dramatic which informs his presentation of the events. At the same time, it seems to me that Hertzberg's description of what happened in the National Assembly contradicts an earlier statement of his concerning the gradual merger of French Jewry with the fabric of the French state. His own narrative suggests, rather, that the transformation of the Jews into French citizens was an act so radical that only the Revolution could have brought it about. This, in effect, was the thesis put forward by Joseph Lémann, a Jewish convert to Christianity who in the 1880's, writing about the entrance of the Jews into French society, indicated that under the *ancien régime*, though they might have gained additional rights and some amelioration of their condition, Jews could never have become a part of French society. I think that Lémann's thesis is substantially correct.

WHILE HERTZBERG emphasizes that emancipation was almost inevitable, he does not overlook the fact that its achievement was attended by substantial criticism and resistance. It is here that the experience of our own time sharpens the historian's eye; the contemporary writer can observe what his predecessors, living in a more sanguine age, failed to see. Indeed, having witnessed the widespread reaction to Jewish integration during the period of 19th-century anti-Semitism, and even—in our day—a temporary suspension of emancipation itself, the contemporary historian might rightly ask whether the seeds of resistance were not already present in the earliest stages of Jewish integration. Whereas other historians have passed off such manifestations as residual prejudice, Hertzberg takes with deadly seriousness the indications of anti-Jewish attitudes during the pre-emancipation and emancipation periods. He rejects, for instance, all the well-meaning attempts to whitewash Voltaire from the charge of anti-Semitism, regarding him instead as the main source of the ideological weapons used against the Jews by otherwise secular-minded opponents. Hertzberg maintains, moreover, that the very process that led to the implementation of emancipation, led also to the creation of the movement that opposed it. This, stated in the closing paragraph of the book, forms the essence of Hertzberg's argument: "The liberal age in Europe was . . . made by the new intellectuals who first appeared in power in the French Revolution. It was to be devastated by the heirs . . . to the anti-Jewish intelligentsia that appeared in the very midst of these events."

Now, although I think that Hertzberg's conclusions are in general true and accurate, I would argue with his methodology on the not unimportant grounds of semantics. Hertzberg uses the terms "anti-Semitism," "emancipation," and "Jewish question" in dealing with the problems of pre-revolutionary and revolutionary times. All historians, to be sure, resort to this kind of shorthand notation, but when one is dealing with the very emergence of historical phenomena, one cannot be unconcerned about the applicability of the terms employed. The term "anti-Semitism," for instance, did not come into use until the late 1870's; "emancipation," as I have illustrated elsewhere, did not appear before 1828; and the term, "Jewish question," Jacob Toury has shown, emerged in the year 1833. In the period under consideration by Hertzberg, then, these three key words were not yet current—a fact which may lead us to assume that neither had the issues involved become fully crystallized nor had any clear fronts yet been established on these problems. To focus specifically on the question of Voltaire's "anti-Semitism" is therefore to force Voltaire's ideas and actions into a terminological framework that was developed much later, and is also, perhaps, to avoid the more necessary task, which should properly be an examination of his point of view and intentions.

The terms "emancipation" and "Jewish question" are similarly misleading in this context. They indicate clear-cut postulations, on the one hand a demand for absolutely equal rights, and on the other an acknowledgment by critics and enemies that the fact of Jewish existence presents a real problem. But these attitudes, too, evolved only at a later time, while at the pre-revolutionary stage and even during the Revolution itself the positions of both sympathizers and adversaries to the Jews' cause were still unclarified. There was wavering encouragement on the part of those who favored emancipation and almost instinctive resistance on the part of those opposed.

ALL THIS, I think, is in full conformity with Hertzberg's own findings. He stresses that those who recommended Jewish acceptance into society and state were no less critical of Jewish existence than were their opponents. And indeed, even when acceptance was finally granted to the Jews, it came to them not as they actually were at the time but as it was imagined they would become under the transforming influence of the new social, religious, and political circumstances brought about by the Revolution. Both promoters of the Jewish cause and its adversaries shared a contempt for the Jew as he was and a denial that the Judaism they knew was of any intrinsic value; risking an exaggeration, one might say that even those who accepted the Jews into state and society did so with the secret hope that, ultimately, the recipients of their favor would disappear. As, however, Jews continued obstinately to remain Jews, and even while in the process of assimilation still retained many of their old characteristics, particularly their social cohesion and solidarity, reaction began inevitably to set in. Hertzberg claims that "the glories and the tragedies to come had already been conceived" in 1791; this is certainly true, if by the term "conceived" we understand not what was contemplated for the future but what was already inherent in the situation.

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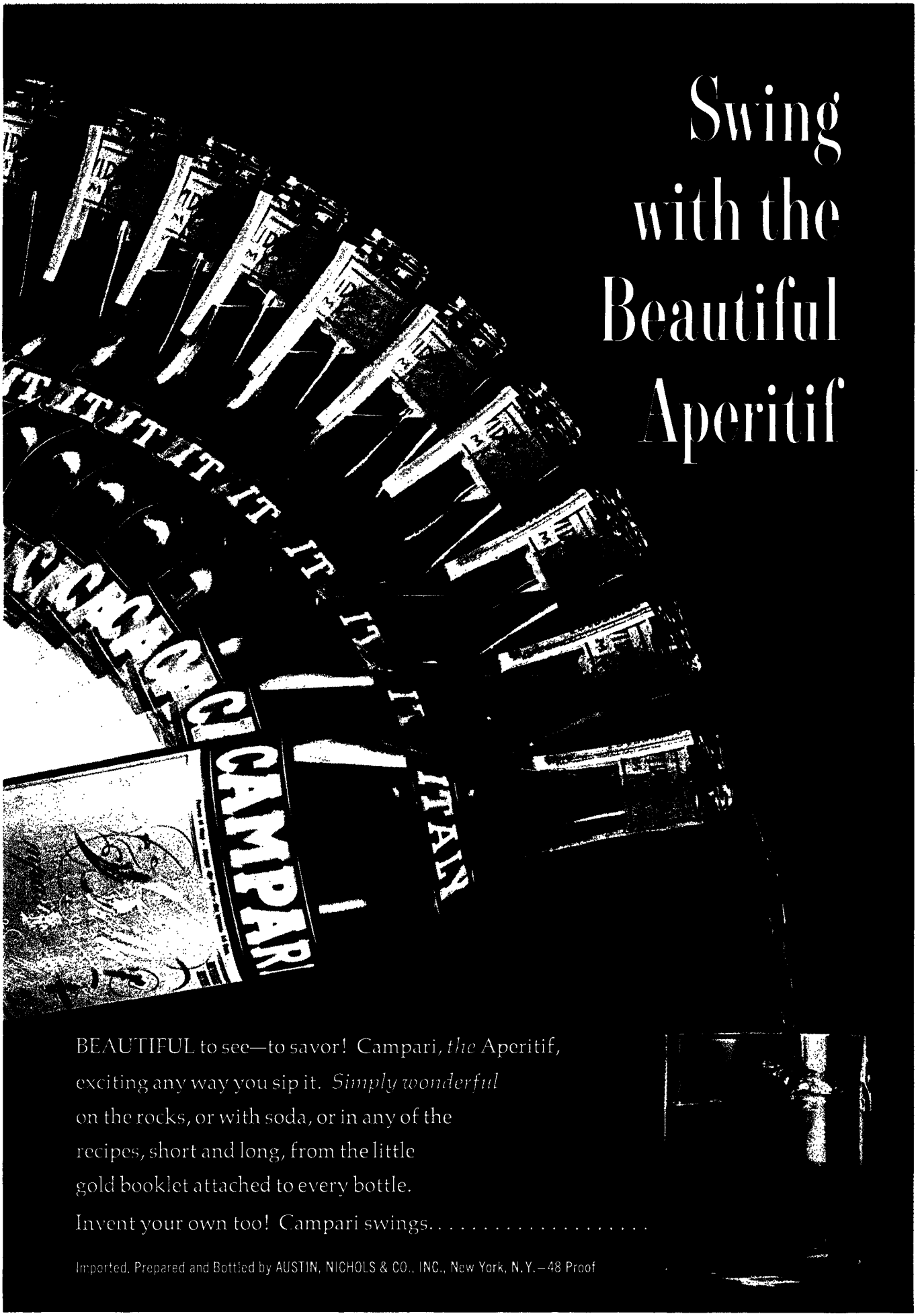

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